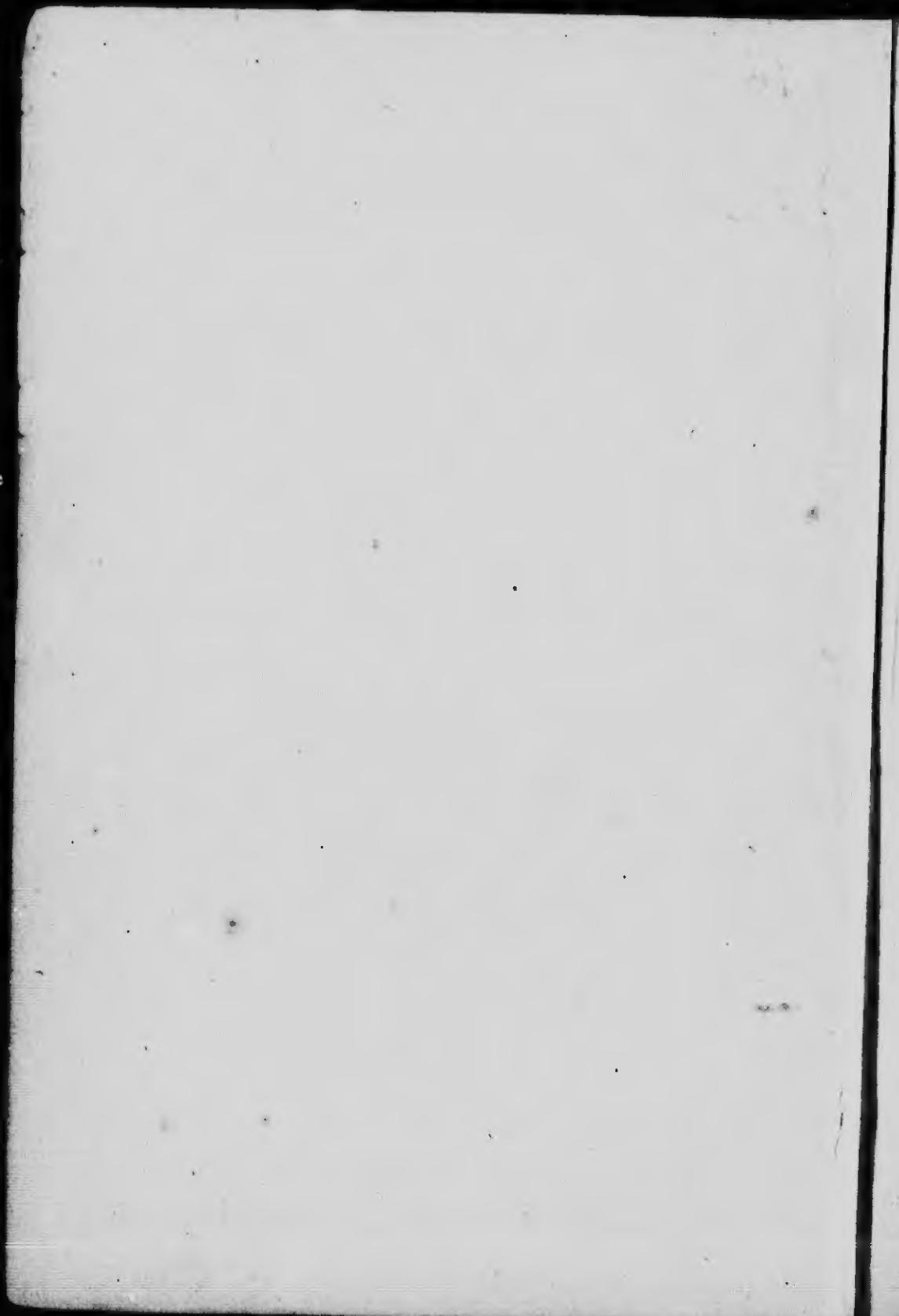


new 1920.

To Leslie

Wishing you a  
merry Xmas.

Marjorie



PECK'S BAD BOY  
AND  
THE GROCERY MAN

BY  
GEO. W. PECK

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*Illustrated*

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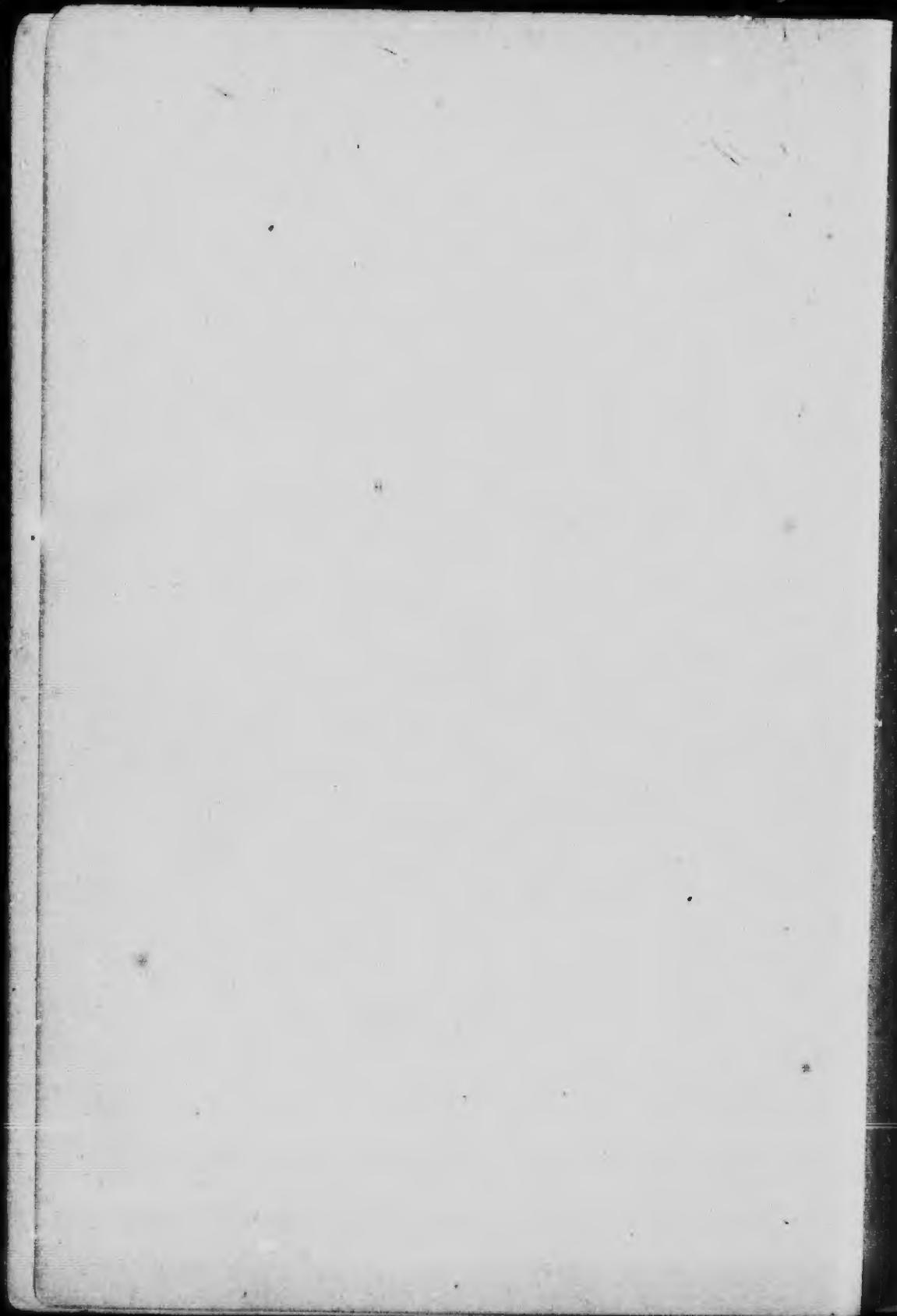
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# THE GROCERY MAN AND PECK'S BAD BOY

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## CHAPTER I.

### VARIEGATED DOGS.

"How do you and your Pa get along now?" asked the grocery man of the bad boy, as he leaned against the counter instead of sitting down on a stool, while he bought a bottle of liniment.

"O, I don't know. He don't seem to appreciate me. What he ought to have is a deaf and dumb boy, with only one leg, and both arms broke—then he could enjoy a quiet life. But I am too gay for Pa, and you needn't be surprised if you never see me again. I talk of going off with a circus. Since I played the variegated dogs on Pa, there seems to have been a coldness in the family, and I sleep on the roof."

"Variegated dogs," said the store keeper, "what kind of a game is that? You have not played another Daisy trick on your Pa, have you?"

"Oh, no, it was nothing of that kind. You know Pa thinks he is smart. He thinks because he is forty-eight years old he knows it all; but it don't seem to me as though

a man of his age, that had sense, would let a tailor palm off on him a pair of pants so tight that he would have to use a button-hook to button them; but they can catch him on everything, just as though he was a kid smoking cigarettes. Well, you know Pa drinks some. That night the new club opened he came home pretty fruitful, and next morning his head ached so he said he would buy me a dog if I would go down town and get a bottle of pollynurious water for him. You know that dye house on Grand avenue, where they have got the four white spitz dogs. When I went after the penurious water, I noticed they had been coloring their dogs with the dye stuff, and I put up a job with the dye man's little boy to help me play it on Pa. They had one dog dyed pink, another blue, another red, and another green, and I told the boy I would treat him to ice cream if he would let one out at a time, when I came down with Pa, and call him in and let another out, and when we started to go away, to let them all out. What I wanted to do was to paralyze Pa, and make him think he had got 'em, got dogs the worst way. So, about ten o'clock when his head got cleared off, and his stomach got settled, he changed ends with his cuffs, and we came down town, and I told him I knew where he could get a splendid white spitz dog for me, for five dollars; and if he would get it, I would never do anything disrespectful again, and would just sit up nights to please him, and help him up stairs and get seltzer for him. So we went by the dye house and just as I told him I didn't want anything but a white dog, the door opened, and the pink dog came out and barked at us, and I said 'that's him' and the boy called him back. Pa looked as though he had the colic, and his eyes stuck out, and he said 'Henry, that is a pink dog!' and I said 'no, it is a white dog, Pa,' and just then the green dog came out, and I asked Pa if it wasn't a pretty white dog, and Pa, he turned pale and

said 'hell, boy, that is a green dog—what's got into the dogs?' I told he must be color blind, and was feeling in my pocket for a strap to tie the dog, and telling him he must be careful of his health or he would see something worse than green dogs, when the green dog went in, and the blue dog came rushing out and barked at Pa. Well, Pa leaned against a tree box, and his eyes stuck out like stops on an organ, and the sweat was all over his face in drops as big as kernels of hominy.

"I think a boy ought to do everything he can to make it pleasant for his Pa, don't you? And yet, some parents don't realize what a comfort a boy is. The blue dog was called in, and just as Pa wiped the perspiration off his forehead, and rubbed his eyes, and put on his specs, the red maroon dog came out. Pa acted as if he was tired, and sat down on a horse block. Dogs do make some people tired, don't they? He took hold of my hand, and his hand trembled just as though he was putting a gun wad in the collection plate at church, and he said, 'My son, tell me truly, is that a red dog?'

"A fellow has got to lie a little if he is going to have any fun with his Pa, and I told him it was a white dog, and I could get it for five dollars. He straightened up just as the dog went into the house, and said, 'Well, I'm dem'd; ' and just then the boy let all the dogs out and sicked them on a cat, which ran up a shade tree right near Pa, and they rushed all around us—the blue dog going between his legs, and the green dog trying to climb the tree, and the pink dog barking, and the red dog standing on his hind feet.

"Pa was weak as a cat, and told me to go right home with him, and he would buy me a bicycle. He asked me how many dogs there were, and what was the color of them. I s'pose I did awful wrong, but I told him there was only one dog, and a cat, and the dog was white.

"Well, sir, Pa acted just as he did the night Hancock was beat, and he had to have the doctor to give him something to quiet him (the time he wanted me to go down town and buy a hundred rat traps, but the doctor said never mind, I needn't go). I took him home, and Ma soaked his feet, and give him some ginger tea, and while I was gone after the doctor he asked Ma if she ever saw a green dog.

"That was what made all the trouble. If Ma had kept her mouth shut I would have been all right, but she up and told him that they had a green dog, and a blue dog, and all colors of spitz dogs down at the dyers. They dyed them just for an advertisement, and for him to be quiet, and he would feel better when he got over it. Pa was all right when I got back and told him the doctor had gone to Wauwatosa, and I had left an order on his slate. Pa said he would leave an order on my slate. He took a harness tug and used it for breeching on me. I don't think a boy's Pa ought to wear a harness on his son, do you? He said he would learn me to play rainbow dogs on him. He said I was a liar, and he expected to see me wind up in Congress. Say, is Congress anything like Waupun or Sing Sing? No, I can't stay, thank you, I must go down to the office and tell Pa I have reformed, and freeze him out of a circus ticket. He is a good enough man, only he don't appreciate a boy that has got all the modern improvements. Pa and Ma are going to enter me in the Sunday school. I guess I'll take first money, don't you?"

And the bad boy went out with a visible limp, and a look of genius cramped for want of opportunity.

## CHAPTER II.

## HIS PA PLAYS JOKE.

"Say, do you think a little practical joke does any hurt?" asked the bad boy of the grocery man, as he came in with his Sunday suit on, and a bouquet in his button-hole, and pried off a couple of figs from a new box that had been just opened.

"No sir," said the grocery man, as he licked off the syrup that dripped from a quart measure, from which he had been filling a jug. "I hold that a man who gets mad at a practical joke, that is, one that does not injure him, is a fool, and he ought to be shunned by all decent people. That's a nice bouquet you have in your coat. What is it, pansies? Let me smell of it," and the grocery man bent over in front of the boy to take a whiff at the bouquet. As he did so a stream of water shot out of the innocent looking bouquet and struck him full in the face, and ran down over his shirt, and the grocery man yelled murder, and fell over a barrel of axe helve and scythe smaths, and then groped around for a towel to wipe his face.

"You condamn skunk," said the grocery man to the boy, as he took up an axe helve and started for him, "what kind of a goiblasted squirt gun have you got there. I will manl you, by thunder," and he rolled up his shirt sleeves.

"There, keep your temper. I took a test vote of you on the subject of practical jokes, before the machine began to play upon the conflagration that was raging on your whisby nose, and you said that a man who would get mad at

a joke was a fool, and now I know it. Here let me show it to you. There is a rubber hose runs from the bouquet, inside my coat to my pants pocket, and there is a bulb of rubber, that holds about half a pint, and when a feller smells of the possey, I squeeze the bulb, and you see the result. It's fun, where you don't squirt it on a person that gets mad."

The grocery man said he would give the boy half a pound of figs if he would lend the bouquet to him for half an hour, to play it on a customer, and the boy fixed it on the grocery man, and turned the nozzle so it would squirt right back into the grocery man's face. He tried it on the first customer that came in, and got it right in his own face, and then the bulb in his pants pocket got to leaking, and the rest of the water ran down the grocery man's trousers' leg, and he gave it up in disgust, and handed it back to the boy.

"How was it your Pa had to be carried home from the sociable in a hack the other night?" asked the grocery man, as he stood close to the stove so his pants leg would dry.  
"He has not got to drinking again, has he?"

"O, no," said the boy, as he filled the bulb with vinegar, to practice on his chum. "It wa: this bouquet that got Pa into the trouble. You see I got Pa to smell of it, and I just filled him chuck full of water. He got mad and called me all kinds of names, and said I was no good on earth, and I would fetch up in state's prison, and then he wanted to borrow it to wear to the sociable. He said he would have more fun than you could shake a stick at, and I asked him if he didn't think he would fetch up in state's prison, and he said it was different with a man. He said when a man played a joke there was a certain dignity about it that was lacking in a boy. So I lent it to him, and we all went to the sociable in the basement of the church. I never see Pa

more kitteny that he was that night. He filled the bulb with ice water, and the first one he got to smell of his button-hole bouquet was an old maid who thinks Pa is a heathen, but she likes to be made something of by anybody that wears pants, and when Pa sidled up to her and began talking about what a great work the christian wimmen of the land were doing in educating the heathen, she felt real good, and then she noticed Pa's possey in his button-hole and she touched it, and then she reached over her beak to smell of it. Pa he squeezed the bulb, and about half a tea-cupful of water struck her right in the nose, and some went into her strangle place, and *O, my*, didn't she yell. The sisters gathered around her and they said her face was all covered with perspiration, and the paint was coming off, and they took her in the kitchen, and she told them Pa had slapped her with a dish of ice cream, and the wimmin told the minister and the deacons, and they went to Pa for an explanation, and Pa told them it was not so, and the minister got interested and got near Pa, and Pa let the water go at him, and hit him in the eye, and then a deacon got a dose, and Pa laughed; and then the minister, who used to go to college, and be a hazer, and box, he got mad and squared off and hit Pa three times right by the eye, and one of the deacons kicked Pa, and Pa got mad and said he could clean out the whole shebang, and began to pull off his coat, when they bundled him out doors, and Ma got mad to see Pa abused, and she left the sociable, and I had to stay and eat ice cream and things for the whole family. Pa says that settles it with him. He says they haven't got any more christian charity in that church than they have in a tannery. His eyes are just getting over being black from the sparring lessons, and how he has got to go through oysters and beef-steak cure again. He says it is all owing to me."

"Well, what has all this got to do with your putting up signs in front of my store, 'Rotten Eggs,' and 'Frowy Butter a speciality,' said the grocery man as he took the boy by the ear and pulled him around. You have got an idea you are smart, and I want you to keep away from here. The next time I catch you in here I shall call the police and have you pulled. Now git!"

The boy pulled his ear back on the side of his head



IF I WAS A PROVISION PIRATE.

where it belonged, took out a cigarette and lit it, and after puffing smoke in the face of the grocery cat that was sleeping on the cover to the sugar barrel he said:

"If I was a provision pirate that never sold anything but what was spoiled so it couldn't be sold in a first-class store, who cheated in weights and measures, who bought only wormy figs and decayed cod-fish, who got his butter from a fat rendering establishment, his cider from a vinegar fer-

tory, and his sugar from a glucose factory, I would not insult the son of one of the finest families. Why, sir, I could go out on the corner, and when I saw customers coming here, I could tell a story that would turn their stomachs, and send them to the grocery on the next corner. Suppose I should tell them that the cat sleeps in the dried apple barrel, that the mice made nests in the prune box, and rats run riot through the raisins, and that you never wash your hands except on Decoration day and Christmas, that you wipe your nose on your shirt sleeves, and that you have the itch, do you think your business would be improved? Suppose I should tell customers that you buy sour kraut of a wooden-shod Polacker, who makes it of pieces of cabbage that he gets by gathering swill, and sells that stuff to respectable people, could you pay your rent? If I should tell them that you put passengers in the collection plate at church, and charge the minister forty cents a pound for oleomargarine, you would have to close up. Old man, I am onto you, and now you apologize for pulling my ear."

The grocery man turned pale during the recital, and finally said the bad boy was one of the best little fellows in this town, and the boy went out and hung up a sign in front: Girl wanted to cook.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE PRACTICE.

"I hear you had burglars over to your house last night," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in and sat on the counter right over a little gimlet hole, where the grocery man had fixed a darning needle so that by pulling a string the needle would fly up through the hole and run into the boy about an inch. The grocery man had been laying for the boy about two days, and now that he had got him right over the hole the first time, it made him laugh to think how he would make him jump and yell, and as he edged off and got hold of the string the boy looked, unconscious of impending danger. The grocery man pulled, and the boy sat still. He pulled again, and again, and finally the boy said:

"Yes, it is reported that we had burglars over there. O, you needn't pull that string any more. I heard you was setting a trap for me, and I put a piece of board inside my pants, and thought I would let you exercise yourself. Go ahead if it amuses you. It don't hurt me."

The grocery man looked sad, and then smiled a sickly sort of a smile, at the failure of his plan to puncture the boy, and then he said, "Well, how was it? The policeman didn't seem to know much about the particulars. He said there was so much deviltry going on at your house that nobody could tell when anything was serious, and he was inclined to think it was a put up job."

"Now, let's have an understanding," says the boy.

"Whatever I say, you are not to give me away. It's a go, is it? I have always been afraid of you, because you have a sort of decayed egg look about you. You are like a peck of potatoes with the big ones on top, a sort of a strawberry box, with the bottom raised up, so I have thought you would go back on a fellow. But if you won't give this away, here goes. You see, I hear Ma tell Pa to bring up another bottle of liniment last night. When Ma corks herself, or has a pain anywhere, she just uses liniment for all that is out, and a pint bottle don't last more than a week. Well, I told my chum, and we laid for Pa. This liniment Ma uses is offul hot, and almost blisters. Pa went to the Langtry show, and did not get home till eleven o'clock, and me and my chum decided to teach Pa a lesson. I don't think it is right for a man to go to the theaters and not take his wife or his little boy."

"So we concluded to burgle Pa. We agreed to lay on the stairs, and when he came up my chum was to hit him on the head with a dried bladder, and I was to stab him on his breast pocket with a stick, and break the liniment bottle, and make him think he was killed.

"It couldn't have worked better if we had rehearsed it. We had talked about burglars at supper time, and got Pa nervous, so when he came up stairs and was hit on the head with the bladder, the first thing he said was 'Burglars, by mighty,' and he started to go back, and I hit him on the breast pocket, where the bottle was, and then we rushed by him, down stairs, and I said in a stage whisper, 'I guess he's a dead man,' and we went down cellar and up the back stairs to my room and undressed. Pa hollered to Ma that he was murdered, and Ma called me, and I came down in my night-shirt, and the hired girl came down, and Pa was on the lounge, and he said his life-blood was fast ebbing away. He held his hand on the wound, and said he could

feel the warm blood trickling clear down to his boots. I told Pa to stuff some tar into the wound, such as he told me to put on my lip to make my mustache grow, and Pa said, 'My boy, this is no time for trifling. Your pa is on his last legs. When I came up stairs I met six burglars, and I attacked them, and forced four of them down, and was going to hold them and send for the police, when two more, that I did not know about, jumped on me, and I was getting the best of them when one of them struck me over the head with a crowbar, and the other stabbed me in the heart with a butcher knife. I have received my death wound, my boy, and my hot southern blood, that I offered up so freely for my country in her time of need, is passing from my body, and soon your Pa will be only a piece of poor clay. Get some ice and put on my stomach, and all the way down, for I am burning up.' I went to the water pitcher and got a chunk of ice and put inside Pa's shirt, and while Ma was tearing up an old skirt to stop the flow of blood, I asked Pa if he felt better, and if he could describe the villains who had murdered him. Pa gasped and moved his legs to get them cool from the clotted blood, he said, and he went on, 'One of them was about six foot high, and had a sandy mustache. I got him down and hit him on the nose, and if the police find him, his nose will be broke. The second one was thick set, and weighed about two hundred. I had him down and my boot was on his neck, and I was knocking two more down when I was hit. The thick set one will have the mark of boot heels on his throat. Tell the police when I'm gone, about the boot heel marks.'

"By this time Ma had got the skirt torn up and she stuffed it under Pa's shirt, right where he said he was hit, and Pa was telling us what to do to settle his estate, when Ma began to smell the liniment, and she found the broken bottle in his pocket, and searched Pa for the place where he

was stabbed, and then she began to laugh, and Pa got mad and said he didn't see as a death-bed scene was such an almighty funny affair; and then she told him he was not hurt, but that he had fallen on the stairs and broke his



THE DRACOW GOT OFF THE COUNTER WITH HIS HAND CLASPED. bottle, and that there was no blood on him, and he said, 'do you mean to tell me my body and legs are not bathed in human gore?' and then Pa got up and found it was only the liniment. He got mad and asked Ma why she didn't fly around and get something to take that liniment off his

legs, as it was eating them right through to the bone; and then he saw my chum put his head in the door, with one gallus hanging down, and Pa looked at me, and then he said, 'Look-a-here, if I find out it was you boys that put up this job on me, I'll make it so hot for you that you will think liniment is ice cream in comparison.' I told Pa it didn't look reasonable that me and my chum could be six burglars, six feet high, with our noses broke, and boot-heel marks on our neck, and Pa, he said for us to go to bed all-fired quick, and give him a chance to rinse off that liniment, and we retired. Say, how does my Pa strike you as a good single-handed liar?" and the boy went up to the counter, while the grocery man went after a scuttle of coal.

In the mean time one of the grocery man's best customers—a deacon in the church—had come in and sat down on the counter over the darning needle, and as the grocery man came in with the coal, the boy pulled the string, and went out the door and tipped over a basket of rutabagas, while the deacon got down off the counter with his hands clasped, and angry in every feature, and told the grocery man he could whip him in two minutes. The grocery man asked what was the matter, and the deacon hunted up the source from whence the darning needle came through the counter, and as the boy went across the street, the deacon and the grocery man were rolling on the floor, the grocery man trying to hold the deacon's fists while he explained about the darning needle, and that it was intended for the boy. How it came out the boy did not wait to see.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PA BURTHE.

"SAY, can't I sell you some stock in a silver mine?" asked the bad boy of the grocery man, as he came in the store and pulled from his breast pocket a document printed on parchment paper, and representing several thousand dollars stock in a silver mine.

"Look-a-here," said the grocery man, as he turned pale, and thought of telephoning to the police station for a detective, "you haven't been stealing your father's mining stock, have you? Great heavens, it has come at last! I have known all the time that you would turn out to be a burglar, or a defaulter or robber of some kind. Your father has the reputation of having a bonanza in a silver mine, but if you go lugging his silver stock around he will soon be ruined. Now you go right back home and put that stock in your Pa's safe, like a good boy."

"Put it in the safe! O, no, we keep it in a box stall now, in the barn. I will trade your this thousand dollars in stock for two heads of lettuce, and get Pa to sign it over to you, if you say so. Pa told me I could have the whole trunk full if I wanted it, and the hired girls are using the silver stock to clean the windows, and kindle fires, and Pa has quit the church, and says he won't belong to any concern that harbors bilks. What's a bilk?" said the boy as he opened a candy jar and took out four sticks of hoarhound candy.

"A bilk," said the grocery man, as he watched the boy,

"is a fellow that plays a man for candy, or money, or anything, and don't intend to return an equivalent. You are a small sized bilk. But what's the matter with your Pa and the church, and what has the silver mine stock got to do with it?"

"Well, you remember that exhorter that was here last fall, that used to board around with the church people all the week and talk about Zion and laying up treasures where the moths wouldn't gnaw them, and they wouldn't get



AND PA USED TO SIT UP NIGHTS TO LOOK AT IT.

rusty, and where thieves wouldn't pry off the hinges. He was the one that used to go home with Ma from prayer meetings, when Pa was down town, and who wanted to pay off the church debt in solid silver bricks. He's the bilk. I guess if Pa should get him by the neck he would jerk nine kinds of revealed religion out of him. O, Pa is hotter than he was when the hornets took the lunch off of him. When you strike a pious man on the pocket-book it hurts him. That fellow prayed and sang like an angel, and boarded around like a tramp. He stopped at our house

over a week, and he had specimens of rock that were chuck full of silver and gold, and he and Pa used to sit up nights and look at it. You could pick pieces of silver out of the rock as big as buck shot and he had some silver bricks that were beautiful. He had been out in Colorado and found a hill full of silver rock, and he wanted to form a stock company and dig out millions of dollars. He didn't want anybody but pious men that belonged to the church, in the company, and I think that was one thing that caused Pa to unite with the church so suddenly. I know he was as wicked as could be a few days before he joined the church; but this revivalist, with his words about the beautiful beyond where all shall dwell together in peace and sing praises; and his description of that Colorado mountain where the silver stuck out so you could hang your hat on it, converted Pa. That man's scheme was to let all the church people who were in good standing, and who had plenty of money, into the company, and when the mine began to return dividends by the car load, they could give largely to the church and pay the debts of all the churches, and put down carpets and fresco the ceiling. The man said he felt that he had been steered on to that silver mine by a higher power, and his idea was to work it for the glory of the cause. He said he liked Pa and would make him vice-president of the company. Pa, he bit like a buzz, and I guess he invested five thousand dollars in stock, and Ma, she wanted to come in, and she put in a thousand dollars that she had laid up to buy some diamond ear-rings, and the man gave Pa a lot of stock to sell to other members of the church. They all went into it, even the minister. He drew his salary ahead, and all of the deacons they came in, and the man went back to Colorado with about thirty thousand dollars of good, pious money. Yesterday Pa got a paper from Colorado, giving the whole snap away, and

the pious man has been spending the money in Denver, and whooping it up. Pa suspected something was wrong two weeks ago, when he heard that the pious man had been on a toot in Chicago, and he wrote to a man in Denver, who used to get full with Pa years ago when they were both on the turf, and Pa's friend said the man that sold the stock was a fraud, and that he didn't own no mine, and that he borrowed the samples of ore and silver bricks from a pawn-broker in Denver. I guess it will break Pa up for a while, though he is well enough fixed with mortgages and things; but it hurts him to be took in. He lays it all to Ma—he says if she hadn't let that exhorter for the silver mine go home with her this would not have occurred, and Ma says she believes Pa was in partnership with the man to beat her out of her thousand dollars that she was going to buy a pair of diamond earrings with. O, it is a terror over to the house now. Both of the hired girls put in all the money they had, and took stock and they threaten to sue Pa for arson, and they are going to leave to-night, and Ma will have to do the work. "Don't you never try to get rich quick," said the boy as he peeled a herring, and took a couple of crackers.

"Never you mind me," said the grocery man, "they don't catch me on any of their silver mines; but I hope this will have some influence on you and teach you to respect your Pa's feelings, and not play jokes on him while he is feeling so bad over his being swindled."

"O, I don't know about that, I think when a man is in trouble, if he has a good little boy to take his mind from his troubles, and get him mad at something else, it rests him. Last night we had hot maple syrup and biscuit for supper, and Pa had a saucer full in front of him, just a steaming. I could see he was thinking too much about his mining stock, and I thought if there was anything I could

do to take his mind off of it and place it on something else, I would be doing a kindness that would be appreciated. I sat on the right of Pa, and when he wasn't looking I pulled the table cloth so the saucer of red hot maple syrup dropped off in his lap. Well, you'd a dide to see how quick his thoughts turned from his financial troubles to his physical misfortunes. There was about a pint of hot syrup, and it went all over his lap, and you know how hot melted maple sugar is, and how it sort of clings to anything. Pa jumped up and grabbed hold of his pants' legs to pull them away from himself, and he danced around and told Ma to turn the hose on him, and then he took a pitcher of ice-water and poured it down his pants, and he said the condemned old table was getting so ricketty that a saucer wouldn't stay on it, and I told Pa if he would put some tar on his legs, the same kind that he told me to put on my lip to make my mustache grow, the syrup wouldn't burn so; and then he cuffed me, and I think he felt better. It is a great thing to get a man's mind off of his troubles, but where a man hasn't got any mind like you, for instance.—"

At this point the grocery man picked up a fire poker, and the boy went out in a hurry and hung up a sign in front of the grocery:

***CASH PAID  
FOR FAT DOGS.***

## CHAPTER V.

## MIS PA AND DYNAMITE.

"I guess your Pa's losses in the silver mine have made him crazy, haven't they?" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came into the store with his eye-winkers singed off, and powder marks on his face, and began to play on the harmonica, as he sat down on the end of a stick of stove wood, and balanced himself.

"O, I guess not. He has hedged. He got in with a deacon of another church, and sold some of his stock to him, and Pa says if I will keep my condemned mouth shut he will unload the whole of it, if the churches hold out. He goes to a new church every night there is prayer meeting or anything, and makes Ma go with him to give him tone, and after meeting she talks with the sisters about how to piece a bed quilt, while Pa gets in his work selling silver stock. I don't know but he will order some more stock from the factory, if he sells all he has got," and the boy went on playing, "There's a land that is fairer than day."

"But what was he skipping up street for the other night with his hat off, grabbing at his coat tails as though they were on fire? I thought I never saw a pussy man run any faster. And what was the celebration down on your street about that time? I thought the world was coming to an end," and the grocery man kept away from the boy, for fear he would explode.

"O, that was only a Fenian scare. Nothing serious. You see Pa is a sort of half Englishman. He claims to be an

American citizen when he wants office, but when they talk about a draft he claims to be a subject of Great Britain, and he says they can't touch him. Pa is a darned smart man, and don't you forget it. There don't any of them get ahead of Pa much. Well, Pa has said a good deal about the wicked Fenians, and that they ought to be pulled, and all that, and when I read the story in the papers about the explosion in the British Parliament, Pa was hot. He said the damnirish was ruining the whole world. He didn't dare to say it at the table, or our hired girl would have knocked him silly with a spoonful of mashed potatoes, 'cause she is a nirish girl, and she can lick any Englishman in this town. Pa said there ought to have been somebody there to have taken that bomb up and throwed it in the sewer before it exploded. He said that if he should ever see a bomb he would grab it right up and throw it away where it wouldn't hurt anybody. Pa has me read the papers to him nights, 'cause his eyes have got splinters in 'em, and after I had read all there was in the paper, I made up a lot more and pretended to read it, about how it was rumored that the Fenians here in Milwaukee were going to place dynamite bombs at every house where an Englishman lived, and at a given signal blow them all up. Pa looked pale around the gills, but he said he wasn't scared.

"Pa and Ma were going to call on a she-deacon that night, that has lots of money in the bank, to see if she didn't want to invest in a dead sure paying silver mine, and me and my chum concluded to give them a send-off. We got my big black injy rubber foot ball, and painted 'Divy-might' in big white letters on it, and tied a piece of tarred rope to it for a fuse, and got a big fire-cracker, one of those old Fourth of July horse scarkers, and a basket full of broken glass. We put the foot ball in front of the step and lit the tarred rope and got under the step with the

fire-crackers and basket, where they go down into the basement. Pa and Ma came out of the front door, and down the steps, and Pa saw the foot ball and the burning fuse, and he said 'Great God, Hanner, we are blowed up!' and he started to run, and Ma she stopped to look at it. Just as Pa started to run I touched off the fire-cracker, and my chum arranged it to pour out the broken glass on the brick pavement just as the fire-cracker went off. Well, everything went just as we expected, except Ma. She had examined the foot ball and concluded it was not dangerous, and was just giving it a kick as the fire-cracker went off, and the glass fell, and the fire-cracker was so near her that it scared her, and when Pa looked around Ma was flying across the sidewalk, and Pa heard the noise he thought the house was blown to atoms. O, you'd a dide to see him go around the corner. You could play crokay on his coat-tail, and his face was as pale as Ma's when she goes to a party. But Ma didn't scare much. As quick as she stopped against the hitching post she knew it was us boys, and she came down there, and maybe she didn't maul me. I cried and tried to gain her sympathy by telling her the fire-cracker went off before it was due, and burned my eyebrows off, but she didn't let up until I promised to go and find Pa.

"I tell you, my Ma ought to be engaged by the British government to hunt out the dynamite fiends. She would corral them in two minutes. If Pa had as much sand as Ma has got, it would be warm weather for me. Well, me and my chum went and headed Pa off or I guess he would be running yet. We got him up by the lake shore, and he wanted to know if the house fell down. He said he would leave it to me if he ever said anything against the Fenians, and I told him that he had always claimed that the Fenians were the nicest men in the world, and it seemed to relieve

him very much. When he got home and found the house there he was tickled, and when Ma called him an old bald-headed coward, and said it was only a joke of the boys with a foot ball he laughed right out, and said he knew it all the time, and he ran to see if Ma would be scared. And then he wanted to hug me, but it wasn't my night to hug and I went down to the theatre. Pa don't amount to much when there is trouble. The time Ma had them cramps, you remember, when you got your cucumbers first last season, Pa came near fainting away, and Ma said ever since they had been married when anything ailed her, Pa has had pains just the same as she has, only he grunted more, and thought he was going to die. Gosh, if I was a man I wouldn't be sick every time one of the neighbors had a back ache, would you?"

"Well you can't tell. When you have been married twenty or thirty years you will know a good deal more than you do now. You think you know it all, now, and you are pretty intelligent for a boy that has been brought up carelessly, but there are things that you will learn after a while that will astonish you. But what ails your Pa's tooth? The hired girl was over her to get some corn meal for gruel, and she said your Pa was gumming it, since he lost his teeth."

"O, about the teeth. That was too bad. You see my chum has got a dog that is old, and his teeth have all come out in front, and this morning I borried Pa's teeth before he got up, to see if we couldn't fix them in the dog's mouth, so he could eat better. Pa says it is an evidence of a kind heart for a boy to be good to dumb animals, but it is a darned mean dog that will go back on a friend. We tied the teeth in the dog's mouth with a string that went around his upper jaw, and another around his under jaw, and you'd a dide to see how funny he looked when he laffed. He looked just like Pa when he tried to smile so as to get

me to come up to him so he can lick me. The dog pawed his mouth a spell to get the teeth out, and then we gave him a bone with some meat on, and he began to gnaw the bone, and the teeth came off the plate, and he thought it was pieces of the bone, and he swallowed the teeth. My chum noticed it first, and he said we had got to get in our work pretty quick to save the plates and I think we were in luck to save them. I held the dog, and my chum, who was better acquainted with him, untied the strings and got the gold plates out, but there were only two teeth left, and the dog was happy. He wiggled his tail for more teeth, but we hadn't any more. I am going to give him Ma's teeth some day. My chum says when a dog gets an appetite for anything you have got to keep giving it to him or he goes back on you. But I think my chum played dirt on me. We sold the gold plates to a jewelry man, and my chum kept the money. I think, as long as I furnished the goods, he ought to have given me something besides the experience, don't you? After this I don't have no more partners, you bet." All this time the boy was marking on a piece of paper, and soon after he went out the grocery man noticed a crowd outside, and on going out he found a sign hanging up which read:

**WORMY FIGS  
FOR PARTIES.**

## CHAPTER VI.

THE PAPER CHANGER.

"Say, will you do me a favor?" asked the bad boy of the grocery man, as he sat down on the soap box and put his wet boots on the stove.

"Well, y-e-s," said the grocery man hesitatingly, with a feeling that he was liable to be sold. "If you will help me catch the villain who hangs up those disreputable signs in front of my store, I will. What is it?"

"I want you to lick this stamp and put it on this letter. It is to my girl, and I want to fool her," and the boy handed over the letter, and stamp, and while the grocery man was licking it and putting it on, the boy filled his pockets with dried peaches out of a box.

"There, that's a small job," said the grocery man, as he pressed the stamp on the letter with his thumb and handed it back. "But how are you going to fool her?"

"That's just business," said the boy, as he held the letter to his nose and smelled of the stamp. "That will make her tired. You see, every time she gets a letter from me she kisses this stamp, because she thinks I licked it. When she kisses this stamp, and gets the fumes of plug tobacco, and stale beer, and limberg cheese, and mouldy potatoes, it will knock her down, and then she will ask me what ailed the stamp, and I will tell her I got you to lick it, and then it will make her sick, and her parents will stop trading here. O, it will paralyse her. Do you know, you smell like a glue

factory. Gosh, I can smell you all over the store. Don't you smell anything that smells spoiled?"

The grocery man thought he did smell something that was rancid, and he looked around the stove and finally kicked the boy's boot off the stove and said, "It's your boot burning. Gracious, open the door! It smells like a hot box on a caboose. Whew! And there comes a couple of my best lady customers." The ladies came in and held their handkerchiefs to their noses, and while they were trading the boy said, as though continuing the conversation:

"Yes, Pa says that last oleomargarine I got here is nothing but axle grease. Why don't you put your axle grease in a different kind of a package? The only way you can tell axle grease from oleomargarine is in spreading it on pancakes. Pa says axle grease will spread, but your alleged butter just rolls right up and acts like lip salve, or ointment, and is only fit to use on a sore—"

At this point the ladies went out of the store in disgust, without buying anything, and the grocery man took a dried codfish by the tail and went up to the boy and took him by the neck. "Golblast you, I have a notion to kill you. You have driven away more custom from this store than your neck is worth. Now you git," and he struck the boy across the back with the codfish.

"That's just the way with you all," says the boy, as he put his sleeve up to his eyes and pretended to cry, "what a fellow is up in the world, there is nothing too good for him, but when he gets down, you maul him with a codfish. Since Pa drove me out of the house, and told me to go shirk for my living, I haven't had a kind word from anybody. My chum's dog won't even follow me, and when a fellow gets so low down that a dog goes back on him there is nothing left for him to do but to loaf around a grocery, or sit on a jury, and I am too young to sit on a jury, though I know

more than some of the dead beats that lay around the court to get on a jury. I am going to drown myself, and my death will be laid to you. They will find evidences of cod-fish on my clothing, and you will be arrested for driving me to a suicide's grave. Good-bye. I forgive you," and the boy started for the door.



THE POLICEMAN TOLD PA TO GO HOME AND LOCK HIMSELF IN.

"Hold on here," says the grocery man, feeling that he had been too harsh. "Come back here, and have some maple sugar. What did your Pa drive you away from home for?"

"O, it was on account of St Patrick's Day," said the bad

boy as he bit off half a pound of maple sugar, and dried his tears. "You see, Pa never sees Ma buy a new silk handkerchief, but he wants it. T'other day Ma got one of these orange-colored handkerchiefs, and Pa immediately had a sore throat and wanted to wear it, and Ma let him put it on. I thought I would break him of taking everything nice that Ma got, so when he went down town with the orange handkerchief on his neck, I told some of the St. Patrick boys in the Third ward, who had green ribbons on, that the old duffer that was putting on style was an orange-man, and he said he could whip any St. Patrick's Day man in town. The fellers laid for Pa, and when he came along one of them threw a barrel at Pa, and another pulled the yellow handkerchief off his neck, and they all yelled 'hang him,' and one grabbed a rope that was on the sidewalk where they were moving a building, and Pa got up and dusted. You'd a dide to see Pa run. He met a policeman and said more'n a hundred men had tried to murder him, and they had mauled him, and stolen his yellow handkerchief. The policeman told Pa his life was not safe, and he better go home and lock himself in, and he did, and I was telling Ma about how I got the boys to scare Pa, and he heard it, and he told me that settled it. He said I had caused him to run more foot races than any champion pedestrian, and had made his life unbearable, and now I must go it alone. Now I want you to send a couple of pounds of crackers over to the house, and have your boy tell the hired girl that I have gone down to the river to drown myself, and she will tell Ma, and Ma will tell Pa, and pretty soon you will see a bald headed pussy man whooping it up toward the river with a rope. They may think at times that I am a little tough, but when it comes to parting forever, they weaken."

"Well, the teacher at school says you are a hardened in-

"diddle," said the grocery man, as he charged the crackers to the boy's Pa. "He says he had to turn you out to keep you from ruining the morals of the other scholars. How was that?"

"It was about speaking a piece. When I asked him what I should speak, he told me to learn some speech of some great man, some lawyer or statesman, so I learned one of Bob Ingersoll's speeches. Well you'd a dide to see the teacher and the school committee, when I started in on Bob Ingersoll's lecture, the one that was in the paper when Bob was here. You see I thought if a newspaper that all the pious folks takes in their families, could publish Ingersoll's speech, it wouldn't do any hurt for a poor little boy who ain't knee high to a giraffe, to speak it in school, but they made me dry up. The teacher is a republican, and when Ingersoll was speaking around here on politix, the time of the election, the teacher said Bob was the smartest man this country ever produced. I heard him say that in a corous, when he went bumming around the ward settin 'em up nights specting to be superintendent of schools. He said Bob Ingersoll just took the cake, and I think it was darned mean in him to go back on Bob and me too, just cause there was no 'lection. The school committee made the teacher stop me, and they asked me if I didn't know any other piece to speak, and I told them I knew one of Beecher's, and they let me go ahead, but it was one of Beecher's new ones where he said he didn't believe in any hell, and afore I got warmed up they said that was enough of that, and I had to wind up on "Mary had a Little Lamb." None of them didn't kick on Mary's Lamb and I went through it, and they let me go home. That's about the safest thing a boy can speak in school now-days, either "Mary had a Little Lamb," or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." That's about up to the average intelleck of the

committee. But if a boy tries to branch out as a statesman, they choke him off. Well, I am going down to the river, and I will leave my coat and hat by the wood yard, and get behind the wood, and you steer Pa down there and you will see some tall weeping over them clothes, and maybe Pa will jump in after me, and then I will come out from behind the wood and throw in a board for him to swim ashore on. Good-bye. Give my pocket comb to my chum," and the boy went out and hung up a sign in front of the grocery as follows:

*POP CORN THAT THE CAT HAS SLEPT  
IN, CHEAP FOR  
POP CORN BALLS FOR SOCIABLES.*

## CHAPTER VII.

## HIS MA DECEIVES HIM.

"Give me ten cents worth of saffron, quick," said the bad boy to the grocery man, as he came in the grocery on a gallop, early one morning, with no collar on and no vest. He looked as though he had been routed out of bed in a hurry and had jumped into his pants and boots, and put on his coat and hat on the run.

"I don't keep saffron," said the grocery man as he picked up a barrel of ax-handles the boy had tipped over in his hurry. "You want to go over to the drug store on the corner, if you want saffron. But what on earth is the mat—"

At this point the boy shot out of the door, tipping over a basket of white beans, and disappearing in the drug store. The grocery man got down on his knees on the sidewalk and scooped up the beans, occasionally looking over to the drug store, and just as he got them picked up, the boy came out of the drug store and walked deliberately towards his home as though there was no particular hurry. The grocery man looked after him, took up an ax-handle, spit on his hands, and shouted to the boy to come over pretty soon, as he wanted to talk with him. The boy did not come to the grocery till towards night; but the grocery man had seen him running down town a dozen times during the day and once he rode up to the house with the doctor, and the grocer surmised what was the trouble. Along towards night

the boy came in in a dejected sort of a tired way, sat down on a barrel of sugar, and never spoke.

"What is it, a boy or girl?" said the grocery man, winking at an old lady with a shawl over her head, who was trying to hold a paper over a pitcher of yeast with her thumb.

"How in blazes did you know anything about it?" said the boy, as he looked around in astonishment, and with some indignation. "Well, it's a girl, if you must know, and that's enough," and he looked down at the cat playing on the floor with a potato, his face a picture of dejection.

"O, don't feel bad about it," said the grocery man, as he opened the door for the old lady. "Such things are bound to occur; but you take my word for it, that young one is going to have a hard life unless you mend your ways. You will be using it for a cork to a jug, or to wad a gun with, the first thing your Ma knows."

"I wouldn't touch the darn thing with the tongs," said the boy as he rallied enough to eat some crackers and cheese. "Gosh, this cheese tastes good. I hain't had nothing to eat since morning. I have been all over this town trolling for nurses. They think a boy hasn't got any feelings. But I wouldn't care a goldarn, if Ma hadn't been sending me for neuralgia medicine and hay fever stuff all winter, when she wanted to get rid of me. I have come into the room lots of times when Ma and the sewing girl were at work on some flannel things, and Ma would hide them in a basket and send me off after medicine. I was deceived up to about four o'clock this morning, when Pa come to my room and pulled me out of bed to go over on the West Side after some old woman that knew Ma, and they have kept me whooping ever since. What does a boy want of a sister, unless it is a big sister. I don't want no sister that I have got to hold, and rock, and hold a bottle for. This

affair breaks me all up," and the boy picked the cheese out of his teeth with a sliver he cut from the counter.

"Well, how does your Pa take it?" asked the grocery man, as he charged the boy's Pa with cheese, and saffron and a number of such things.

"O, Pa will pull through. He wanted to boss the whole concern until Ma's chum, an old woman that takes snuff, fired him out into the hall. Pa sat there on my hand-sled, a perfect picture of despair, and I thought it would be a kindness to play it on him. I found the cat asleep in the bathroom, and I rolled the cat up in a shawl and brought it out to Pa and told him the nurse wanted him to hold the baby. It seemed to do Pa good to feel that he was indispensable around the house, and he took the cat on his lap as tenderly as you ever saw a mother hold her infant. Well, I got in the back hall, where he couldn't see me, and pretty soon the cat began to wake up and stretch himself, and Pa said 's-h-h-tootsy, go to sleep now, and let its Pa hold it,' and Pa he rocked back and forth on the hand-sled and began to sing 'by, low, baby.' That settled it with the cat. Well, some cats can't stand music, anyway, and the more the cat wanted to get out of the shawl, the harder Pa sung, and bimeby I heard something rip, and Pa yelled 'scat, you brute,' and when I looked around the corner of the hall the cat was bracing himself against Pa's vest with his toe nails, and yowling, and Pa fell over the sled and began to talk about the hereafter like the minister does when he gets excited in church, and then Pa picked up the sled, and seemed to be looking for me or the cat, but both of us was offul scarce. Don't you think there are times when boys and cats are kind of few around their accustomed haunts? Pa don't look as though he was very smart, but he can hold a cat about as well as the next man. But I am sorry for Ma. She was just getting ready to go to

Florida for her neuralgia, and this will put a stop to it, cause she has to stay and take care of that young one. Pa says I will have a nice time this summer pushing the baby wagon. By the great horn spoons, there has got to be a dividing line somewhere between business and pleasure, and I strike the line at wheeling a baby. I had rather catch a string of perch than to wheel all the babies ever was. They needn't procure no baby on my account, if it is to amuse me. I don't see why babies can't be sawed off onto people that need them in their business. Our folks don't need a baby any more than you need a safe, and there are people just suffering for babies. Say, how would it be to take the baby some night and leave it on some old bachelor's door-step? If it had been a bicycle, or a breech-loading shotgun, I wouldn't have cared, but a baby! Bah! It makes me tired. I'd ruther have a prize package. Well, I am sorry Pa allowed me to come home after he drove me away last week. I guess all he wanted me to come back for was to humiliate me, and send me on errands. Well, I must go and see if he and the cat have made up."

And the boy went out and put a paper sign in front of the store:

**LEAVE YOUR MEASURE FOR  
SAFFRON TEA.**

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE BABY AND THE GOAT.

"Well, how is the baby?" asked the grocery man of the bad boy, as he came into the grocery smelling very "horsey," and sat down on the chair with the back gone, and looked very tired.

"O, darn the baby. Everybody asks me about the baby as though it was mine. I don't pay no attention to the darn thing, except to notice the foolishness going on around the house. Say, I guess that baby will grow up to be a fire engine. The nurse coupled the baby onto a section of rubber hose that runs down into a bottle of milk, and it began to get up steam, and pretty soon the milk began to disappear just like the water does when a fire engine couples on to a hydrant. Pa calls the baby 'Old Number Two.' I am 'Number One,' and if Pa had a hook and ladder truck and a hose cart, and a fire gong he would imagine he was chief engineer of the fire department. But the baby kicks on this milk wagon milk, and howls like a dog that's got lost. The doctor told Pa the best thing he could do was to get a goat, but Pa said since we 'nishiuated him into the Masons with the goat he wouldn't have a goat around nohow. The doc. told Pa the other kind of a goat, I think it was a Samantha goat he said, wouldn't kick with its head, and Pa sent me up into the Polack settlement to see if I couldn't borrow a milk goat for a few weeks. I got a woman to lend us her goat till the baby got big enough to chew beef, for a dollar a week, and paid a dollar in advance, and Pa went up

in the evening to help me get the goat. Well, it was the darndest mistake you ever see. There was two goats so near alike you could not tell which was the goat we leased, and the other goat was the chum of our goat, but it belonged to an Irish woman. We got a bed cord hitched around the Irish goat, and that goat didn't recognize the lease, and when we tried to jerk it along it rared right up, and made things real quick for Pa. I don't know what there is about a goat that makes it so spunky, but that goat seemed to have a grudge against Pa from the first. If there were any places on Pa's manly form that the goat did not explore, with his head, Pa don't know where the places are. O, it lammed him, and when I laffed Pa got mad. I told him every man ought to furnish his own goats, when he had a baby, and I let go the rope and started off, and Pa said he knew how it was, I wanted him to get killed. It wasn't that, but I saw the Irish woman that owned the goat coming around the corner of the house with a cistern pole. Just as Pa was getting the goat out of the gate the goat got crossways of the gate, and Pa yanked, and doubled the goat right up, and I thought he had broke the goat's neck, and the woman thought so too, for she jabbed Pa with the cistern pole just below the belt, and she tried to get a hold on Pa's hair, but he had her there. No woman can get the advantage of Pa that way, cause Ma has tried it. Well, Pa explained it to the woman, and she let Pa off if he would pay her two dollars for damages to her goat, and he paid it, and then we took the nanny goat, and it went right along with us. But I have my opinion of a baby that will drink goat's milk. Gosh, it is like this stuff that comes in a spoiled cocoanut. The baby hasn't done anything but blot since the nurse coupled it onto the goat hydrant. I had to take all my playthings out of the basement to keep the goat from eating them. I guess the milk will taste of powder

and singed hair now. The goat got to eat'ng some Roman candles me and my chum had laid away in the coal bin, and chewed them around the furnace, and the powder leaked out and a coal fell out of the furnace on the hearth, and you'd a dide to see Pa and the hired girl and the goat. You see Pa can't milk nothing but a milk wagon, and he got the hired girl to milk the goat, and they were just hunting around the basement for the goat with a tin cup, when the fireworks went off. Well, there was balls of green, and red and blue fire, and spilled powder blazed up, and the goat just looked astonished, and looked on as though it was sorry so much good fodder was spoiled, but when its hair began to burn, the goat gave one snort and went between Pa and the hired girl like it was shot out of a cannon, and it knocked Pa over a wash boiler into the coal bin, and the hired girl in amongst the kindling wood, and she crossed herself and repeated the catechism, and the goat jumped up on the brick furnace, and they couldn't get it down. I heard the celebration and went down and took Pa by the pants and pulled him out of the coal bin, and he said he would surrender and plead guilty of being the biggest fool in Milwaukee. I pulled the kindling wood off the hired girl, and then she got mad, and said she would milk the goat or die. O, that girl has got sand. She used to work in a glass factory. Well, sir, it was a sight worth two shillings admision to see that hired girl get up on a step ladder to milk that goat on top of the furnace, with Pa sitting on a barrel of potatoes, boosing the job. They are going to fix a gang plank to get the goat down off the furnace. The baby kicked on the milk last night, I guess besides tasting of powder and burnt hair, the milk was too warm on account of the furnace. Pa has got to grow a new lot of hair on the goat, or the woman won't take it back. She don't want no bald goat. Well, they can run the baby and goat

to suit themselves, 'cause I have res'ned. I have gone into business. Don't you smell anything that would lead you to surmise that I had gone into business? No drug store this time," and the boy got up and put his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and looked proud.

"O, I don't know as I smell anything except the faint odor of a horse blanket. What you gone into anyway?" and the grocery man put the wrapping paper under the counter, and put the red chalk in his pocket, so the boy couldn't write any sign to hang up outside.

"You hit it the first time. I have accepted a situation of teller in a livery stable," said the boy, as he searched around for the barrel of cut sugar, which had been removed.

"Teller in a livery stable! Well, that is a new one on me. What is a teller in a livery stable?" and the grocery man looked pleased, and pointed the boy to a barrel of seven cent sugar.

"Don't you know what a teller is in a livery stable? It is the same as teller in a bank. I have to grease the harness, oil the buggies, and curry off the horses, and when a man comes in to hire a horse I have to go down to the saloon and tell the livery man. That's what a teller is. I like the teller part of it; but greasing harness is a little too rich for my blood, but the livery man says if I stick to it I will be governor some day, 'cause most all the great men have begun life taking care of horses. It all depends on my girl whether I stick or not. If she likes the smell of horses I shall be a statesman, but if she objects to it and sticks up her nose, I shall not yearn to be governor, at the expense of my girl. It beats all, don't it, that wimmin settle every great question. Everybody does everything to please wimmin, and if they kick on anything that settles it. But I must go and umpire that game between Pa and the hired

PECK'S BAD BOY.

girl and the goat. Say, can't you come over and see the baby? 'Tain't bigger than a small sachet,' and the boy waited till the grocery man went to draw some vinegar, when he slipped out and put up a sign written on a shingle with white chalk:

**YELLOW SAND WANTED  
FOR  
MAPLE SUGAR.**

## CHAPTER IX.

## A FUNERAL PROCESSION.

"Well, great Julius Caesar's bald-headed ghost, what's the matter with you?" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came into the grocery on crutches, with one arm in a sling, one eye blackened, and a strip of court plaster across his face. "Where was the explosion, or have you been in a fight, or has your Pa been giving you what you deserve, with a club? Here, let me help you; there, sit down on that keg of apple-jack. Well, by the great guns, you look as though you had called somebody a liar. What's the matter?" and the grocery man took the crutches and stood them up against the showcase.

"O, there's not much the matter with me," said the boy in a voice that sounded all broke up, as he took a big apple off a basket and began peeling it with his upper front teeth. "If you think I'm a wreck, you ought to see the minister; they had to carry him home in installments, the way they buy sewing machines. I am all right, but they have got to stop him up with oakum and tar, before he will hold water again."

"Good gracious, you have not had a fight with the minister, have you? Well, I have said all the time, and I stick to it, that you would commit a crime yet, and go to state's prison. What was the fuss about?" and the grocery man laid the hatchet out of the boy's reach for fear he would get excited and kill him.

"O, it was no fuss, it was in the way of business. You

see the livery man that I was working for promoted me. He let me drive a horse to haul sawdust for bedding first, and when he found I was real careful he let me drive an express wagon to haul trunks. Day before yesterday, I think it was—yes, I was in bed all day yesterday—day before yesterday there was a funeral, and our stable furnished the outfit. It was only a common, eleven dollar funeral, so they let me go to drive the horse for the minister—you know, the buggy that goes ahead of the hearse. They gave me an old horse that is thirty years old, that has not been off a walk since nine years ago, and they told me to give him a loose rein, and he would go along all right. It's the same old horse that used to pace so fast on the avenue, years ago, but I didn't know it. Well, I wasn't to blame. I just let him walk along as though he was hauling sawdust and gave him a loose rein. When we got off the pavement, the fellow that drives the hearse, he was in a hurry, 'cause his folks was going to have ducks for dinner, and he wanted to get back, so he kept driving alongside of my buggy, and telling me to hurry up. I wouldn't do it 'cause the livery man told me to walk the horse. Then the minister, he got nervous, and said he didn't know as there was any use of going so slow, because he wanted to get back in time to get his lunch and go to a minister's meeting in the afternoon, but I told him we would all get to the cemetery soon enough if we took it cool, and as for me I wasn't in no sweat. Then one of the drivers that was driving the mourners, he came up and said he had to get back in time to run a wedding down to the one o'clock train, and for me to pull out a little. I have seen enough of disobeying orders, and I told him a funeral in the hand was worth two weddings in the bush, and, as far as I was concerned, this funeral was going to be conducted in a decorous manner, if we didn't get back

till the next day. Well, the minister said, in his regular Sunday school way, 'My little man, let me take hold of the lines,' and like a darned fool I gave them to him. He slapped the old horse on the crupper with the lines, and then jerked up, and the old horse stuck up his off ear, and then the hearse driver told the minister to pull hard and saw on the bit a little, and the old horse would wake up. The hearse driver used to drive the old pacer on the track, and he knew what he wanted. The minister took off his black kid gloves and put his umbrella down between us, and pulled his hat down tight on his head, and began to pull and saw on the bit. The old cripple began to move along sort of sideways, like a hog going to war, and the minister pulled some more, and the hearse driver, who was behind, he said, so you could hear him clear to Waukesha, 'Ye-e-up,' and the old horse kept going faster; then the minister thought the procession was getting too quick, and he pulled harder, and yelled 'who-a,' and that made the old horse worse, and I looked through the little window in the buggy top, behind, and the hearse was about two blocks behind, and the driver was laughing, and the minister he got pale and said, 'my little man, I guess you'd better drive,' and I said, 'Not much, Mary Ann; you wouldn't let me run this funeral the way I wanted to, and now you can boss it, if you will let me get out,' but there was a street car ahead, and all of a sudden there was an earthquake, and when I come to there were about six hundred people pouring water down my neck, and the hearse was hitched to the fence, and the hearse driver was asking if my leg was broke, and a policeman was fanning the minister with a plug hat that looked as though it had been struck by a pile driver, and some people were hauling our buggy into the gutter, and some men were trying to take old pacer out

of the windows of the street car, and then I guess I fainted away again. O, it was worse than telescoping a train loaded with cattle."

"Well, I swan," said the grocery man as he put some eggs in a funnel shaped brown paper for a servant girl. "What did the minister say when he come to?"

"Say! What could he say? He just yelled 'whoa,' and kept sawing with his hands, as though he was driving. I heard that the policeman was going to pull him for fast driving, till he found it was an accident. They told me, when they carried me home in a hack, that it was a wonder everybody was not killed, and when I got home Pa was going to sass me, until the hearse driver told him it was the minister that was to blame. I want to find out if they got the minister's umbrella back. The last I see of it the umbrella was running up his trouser's leg, and the point came out by the small of his back. But I am all right, only my shoulder sprained, and my legs bruised, and my eye black. I will be all right, and shall go to work to-morrow, 'cause the livery man says I was the only one in the crowd that had any sense. I understand the minister is going to take a vacation on account of his liver and nervous prostration. I would if I was him. I never saw a man that had nervous prostration any more than he did when they fished him out of the barbed wire fence after we struck the street car. But that settles the minister business with me. I don't drive for no more preachers. What I want is a quiet party that wants to go on a walk," and the boy got up and hopped on one foot toward his crutches, filling his pistol pocket with figs as he hobbled along.

"Well, sir," said the grocery man, as he took a chew of tobacco out of a pail, and offered some to the boy, knowing that was the only thing in the store the boy would not take, "Do you know I think some of these ministers have about

as little sense on worldly matters as anybody? Now, the idea of that man jerking on an old pacer. It don't make any difference if the pacer was a hundred years old, he would pace if he was jerked on."

"You bet," said the boy, as he put his crutches under his arms, and started for the door. "A minister may be sound on the atonement, but he don't want to saw on an old pacer. He may have the subject of infant baptism down finer than a cambric needle, but if he has ever been to college, he ought to have learned enough not to say 'ye-up' to an old pacer that has been the boss of the road in his time. A minister may be endowed with sublime power to draw sinners to repentance, and make them feel like getting up and dusting for the beautiful beyond, and cause them, by his eloquence, to see angels bright and fair in their dreams, and chariots of fire flying through the pearly gates and down the golden streets of New Jerusalem, but he wants to turn out for a street car all the same, when he is driving a 2.20 pacer. The next time I drive a minister to a funeral, he will walk," and the boy hobbled out and hung out a sign in front of the grocery:

**SMOKED DOG FISH AT HALIBUT  
PRICES, GOOD ENOUGH  
FOR COMPANY.**

## CHAPTER X.

## THE OLD MAN MAKING A SPEECH.

"There, you drop that," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came limping into the store and began to fumble around a box of strawberries. "I have never kicked at your eating my codfish, and crackers and cheese, and herring, and apples, but there has got to be a dividing line somewhere, and I make it at strawberries at six shillings a box, and only two layers in a box. I only bought one box, hoping some plumber or gas man would come along and buy it, and by gum, everybody that has been in the store has sampled a strawberry out of that box, shivered as though it was sour, and gone off without asking the price," and the grocery man looked mad, took a hatchet and knocked in the head of a barrel of apples, and said: "There, help yourself to dried apples."

"O, I don't want your strawberries or dried apples," said the boy, as he leaned against a show case and looked at a bar of red, transparent soap. "I was only trying to fool you. Say, that bar of soap is old enough to vote. I remember seeing it in your showcase when I was about a year old, and Pa came in here with me and held me up to the show case to look at that tin tobacco box, and that round zinc looking-glass, and the yellow wooden pocket comb, and the soap looks just the same, only a little faded. If you would wash yourself once in a while your soap wouldn't dry up on your hands," and the boy sat down on

the chair without any back, feeling that he was even with the grocery man.

"You never mind the soap. It is paid for, and that is more than your father can say about the soap that has been used in his house the past month," said the grocery man, as he split up a box to kindle the fire. "But we won't quarrel. What was it I heard about a band serenading your father, and his inviting them in to lunch?"

"Don't let that get out or Pa will kill me dead. It was a joke. One of those Bohemian bands that goes about town playing tunes for pennies was over on the next street, and I told Pa I guessed some of his friends who had heard we had a baby at the house had hired a band and was coming in a few minutes to serenade him, and he better prepare to make a speech. Pa is proud of being a father at his age, and he thought it no more than right for the neighbors to serenade him, and he went to loading himself for a speech, in the library, and me and my chum went out and told the leader of the band there was a family up there that wanted to have some music, and they didn't care for expense, so they quit blowing where they was and came right along. None of them could understand English except the leader, and he only understood enough to go and take a drink when he is invited. My chum steered the band up to our house and got them to play 'Babies on our Block,' and 'Baby Mine,' and I stopped all the men who were going home and told them to wait a minute and they would see some fun; so when the band got through the second tune, and the Prussians were emptying the beer out of the horns, and Pa stepped out on the porch, there was more nor a hundred people in front of the house. You'd a dide to see Pa, when he put his hand in the breast of his coat, and struck an attitude. He looked like a congressman, or a tramp. The band was scared, cause they thought he was

mad, and some of them were going to run, thinking he was going to throw pieces of brick house at them, but my chum and the leader kept them. Then Pa sailed in. He commenced, 'Fellow Citizens,' and then went away back to Adam and Eve, and worked up to the present day, giving a history of the notable people who had acquired children, and kept the crowd interested. I felt sorry for Pa, cause I knew how he would feel when he came to find out how he had been sold. The Bohemians in the band that couldn't understand English, they looked at each other, and wondered what it was all about, and finally Pa wound up by stating that it was every citizen's duty to own children of his own, and then he invited the band and the crowd in to take some refreshments. Well, you ought to have seen that band come in the house. They fell over each other getting in, and the crowd went home, leaving Pa and my chum and me and the band. Eat! Well, I should smile. They just reached for things and talked Bohemian. Drink! O, no. I guess they didn't pour it down. Pa opened a dozen bottles of champagne, and they fairly bathed in it, as though they had a fire inside. Pa tried to talk with them about the baby, but they couldn't understand, and finally they got I 'l and started out, and the leader asked Pa for three dollars, and that broke him. Pa told the leader he supposed the gentlemen who had got up the serenade had paid for the music, and the leader pointed to me and said I was the gentleman that got it up. Pa paid him, but he had a wicked look in his eye, and me and my chum lit out, and the Bohemians came down the street bilin' full, with their horns on their arms, and they were talking Bohemian for all that was out. They stopped in front of a vacant house, and began to play; but you couldn't tell what tune it was, they were so full, and a policeman came along and drove them home. I guess I will sleep at the livery stable to-

night, cause Pa is so offul unreasonable when anything costs him three dollars besides the champagne."

"Well, you have made a pretty mess of it," said the grocery man. "It's a wonder your Pa does not kill you. But what is it I hear about the trouble at the church? They lay that foolishness to you."

"It's all a lie. They lay everything to me. It was some of them ducks that sing in the choir. I was just as much surprised as anybody when it occurred. You see our minister is laid up from the effects of the ride to the funeral, when he tried to run over a street car; and an old deacon who had symptoms of being a minister in his youth, was invited to take the minister's place, and talk a little. He is an absent-minded old party, who don't keep up with the events of the day, and who ever played it on him knew that he was too pious to even read the daily papers. There was a notice of a choir meeting to be read, and I think the tenor snuggled in the other notice between that and the one about the weekly prayer meeting. Anyway, it wasn't me, but it like to broke up the meeting. After the deacon read the choir notice he took up the other one and read, 'I am requested to announce that the Y. M. C. Association will give a friendly entertainrment with soft gloves, on Tuesday evening, to which all are invited. Brother John Sullivan, the eminent Boston revivalist, will lead the exercises, assisted by Brother Slade, the Maori missionary from Australia. There will be no slugging, but a collection will be taken up at the door to defray expenses.' Well, I thought the people in church would sink through the floor. There was not a person in the church except the poor old deacon but who understood that some wicked wretch had deceived him, and I know by the way the tenor tickled the soprano that he did it. I may be mean, but everything I do is innocent, and I wouldn't be as mean as a choir singer for two

dollars. I felt real sorry for the old deacon, but he never knew what he had done, and I think it would be real mean to tell him. He won't be at the slugging match. That remark about taking up a collection settled the deacon. I must go down to the stable now and help grease a hack, so you will have to excuse me. If Pa comes here looking for me, tell him you heard I was going to drive a picnic party out to Waukeeha, and may not be back in a week. By that time Pa will have got over that Bohemian serenade," and the boy filled his pistol pocket with dried apples, and went out and hung a sign in front of the grocery:

**STRAWBERRIES, TWO SHILLINGS  
A SMELL,  
AND ONE SMELL IS ENOUGH.**

## CHAPTER XI.

## GARDENING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

"S'm here, you coon, you get out of here," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in the store with his face black and shining, "I don't want any colored boys around here. White boys break me up bad enough."

"O, philopena," said the bad boy, as he put his hands on his knees and laughed so the candy jars rattled on the shelves. "You didn't know me. I am the same boy that comes in here and talks your arm off," and the boy opened the cheese box and cut off a piece of cheese so natural that the grocery man had no difficulty in recognizing him.

"What in the name of the seven sleeping sisters have you got on your hands and face," said the grocery man, as he took the boy by the ear and turned him around. "You would pass in a colored prayer meeting, and no one would think you were galvanized. What you got up in such an outlandish rig for?"

"Well, I'll tell you, if you will keep watch at the door. If you see a bald-headed colored man coming along the street with a club, you whistle, and I will fall down cellar. The bald-headed colored man will be Pa. You see, we moved yesterday. Pa told me to get a vacation from the livery stable, and we would have fun moving. But I don't want any more fun. I know when I have got enough fun. Pa carried all the light things, and when it came to lifting, he had a crick in the back. Gosh, I never was so tired as

I was last night, and I hope we have got settled, only some of the goods haven't turned up yet. A drayman took one load over on the West Side, and delivered them to a house that seemed to be expecting a load of household furniture. He thought it was all right, if everybody that was moving got a load of goods. Well, after we got moved, Pa said we must make a garden, and we said we would go out and spade up the ground and sow peas, and radishes, and beets. There was some neighbors lived in the next house to our new one, that was all wimmen, and Pa don't like to have them think he had to work, so he said it would be a good joke to disguise ourselves as tramps, and the neighbors would think we had hired some tramps to dig in the garden. I told Pa of a boss scheme to fool them. I suggested that we take some of his shoe blacking that is put on with a sponge, and black our faces, and the neighbors would think we had hired an old colored man and his boy to work in the garden. Pa said it was immense, and he told me to go and black up, and if it worked, he would black hisself. So I went and put this burnt cork on my face, 'cause it would wash off, and Pa looked at me and said it was wack, and for me to fix him up, too. So I got the bottle of shoe blacking and painted Pa so he looked like a colored coal heaver. Actually, when Ma saw him she ordered him off the premises, and when he laffed at her and acted sassy, she was going to throw biling water on Pa. But I told her the scheme, and she let up on Pa. O' you'd a dide to see us out in the garden. Pa looked like Uncle Tom, and I looked like Topsy, only I ain't that kind of a colored person. We worked till a boy throwed some tomato cans over the alley fence and hit me, and I piled over the fence after him and left Pa. It was my chum, and when I had caught him we put up a job to get Pa to chase us. We throwed some more cans, and Pa came

out and my chum started and I after him, and Pa after both of us. He chased us two blocks and then we got behind a policeman, and my chum told the policeman it was a crazy old colored man that wanted to kidnap us, and the policeman took Pa by the neck and was going to club



THE POLICEMAN TOOK PA BY THE "NUCK."

him, but Pa said he would go home and behave. He was offul mad, and he went home, and we looked through the fence and Pa was trying to wash off the blacking. You see that blacking won't wash off. You have to wear it off. Pa would wash his face with soap suds, and then look in

the glass, and he was blacker every time he washed, and when Ma laffed at him he said the offulest words, something like 'sweet spirit hear my prayer,' then he washed himself again. I am going to leave my burnt cork on, 'cause if I washed it off Pa would know there had been some smouging somewhere. I asked the shoe store man how long it would take the blacking to wear off, and he said it ought to wear off in a week. I guess Pa won't go out doors much, unless it is in the night. I am going to get him to let me go off in the country fishing, till mine wears off, and when I get out of town I will wash up. Say, you don't think a little blacking hurts a man's complexion do you, and you don't think a man ought to get mad because it won't wash off, do you?"

"O, probably it don't hurt the complexion," said the grocery man, as he sprinkled some fresh water on the wilted lettuce, so it would look fresh while the hired girl was buying some, "and yet it is mighty unpleasant, where a man has got an engagement to go to a card party, as I know your Pa has to-night. As to getting mad about it, if I was your Pa I would take a barrel stave and shatter your castle scandalous. What kind of a fate do you think awaits you when you die, anyway?"

"Well, I am mixed on the fate that awaits me when I die. If I should go off sudden, with all my sins on my head, and this burnt cork on my face, I should probably be a neighbor to you, way down below, and they would give me a job as fireman, and I should feel bad for you every time I chucked in another chunk of brimstone, and thought of you trying to swim dog-fashion in the lake of fire, and straining your eyes to find an iceberg that you could crawl up on to cool your parched hind legs. If I don't die slow so I will have time to repent and be saved, I shall be toasted brown. That's what the minister says,

and they wouldn't pay him two thousand dollars a year and give him a vacation to tell anything that was not so. I tell you it is painful to think of that place that so many pretty fair average people here are going to when they die. Just think of it, a man that swears once, if he don't hedge, and take it back, will go to the bad place. If a person steals a pin, just a small, no account pin, he is as bad as if he stole all there was in a bank, and he stands the best chance of going to the bad place. You see, if a fellow steals a little thing like a pin, he forgets to repent, cause it don't seem to be worth while to make so much fuss about. But if a fellow robs a bank, or steals a whole lot of money from orphans, he knows it is a mighty serious matter, and he gets in his work repenting, too quick, and he is liable to get to the good place, while you, who have only stole a few potatoes out of a bushel that you sold to the orphan asylum, will forget to repent, and you will sizzle. I tell you, the more I read about being good, and going to heaven, the more I think a fellow can't be too careful, and from this out you won't find a better boy than I am. When I come in here after this and take a few dried peaches or crackers and cheese, you charge it right up to Pa, and then I won't have it on my mind and have to answer for it at the great judgment day. I am going to shake my chum, cause he chews tobacco, which is wicked, though I don't see how that can be, when the minister smokes, but I want to be on the safe side. I am going to be good or bust a suspender, and hereafter you can point to me as the boy who has seen the folly of an ill-spent life, and if there is such a thing as a fifteen-year-old boy, who has been a terror, getting to heaven, I am the hairpin. I tell you, when I listen to the minister tell about the angels flying around there, and I see pictures of them prettier than any girl in this town, with chubby arms with dim-

ples in the elbows and shoulders, and long golden hair, and think of myself here cleaning off horses in a livery stable and smelling like an old harness, it makes me tired, and I wouldn't miss going there for ten dollars. Say, you would make a healthy angel, for a back street of the new Jerusalem, but you would give the whole crowd away unless you washed up, and sent that shirt to the Chinese laundry. Yes, sir, hereafter you will find me as good as I know how to be. Now I am going to wash up and go and help the minister move."

As the boy went out the grocery man sat for several minutes thinking of the change that had come over the bad boy, and wondered what had brought it about, and then he went to the door to watch him as he wended his way across the street, with his head down, as though in deep thought, and the grocery man said to himself, "that boy is not as bad as some people think he is," and then he looked around and saw a sign hanging up in front of the store, written on a piece of box cover, with a blue pencil:—

**REFINED  
CANNED HAM AND TONGUE  
GOOD ENOUGH  
FOR CHURCH PICNICS.**

and he looked after the boy, who was slipping down an alley, and said: "The condemn little whelp. Wait till I catch him."

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE OLD MAN SHOOTS THE MINISTER.

"SAY, I thought you was going to try to lead a different life," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as the youth came in with his pockets full of angle worms, and wanted to borrow a baking-powder can to put them into, while he went fishing, and he held a long angle worm up by the tail and let it wiggle so he frightened a girl that had come in after two cents' worth of yeast, so she dropped her pitcher and went out of the grocery as though she was chased by an anaconda.

"I am going to lead a different life; but a boy can't change his whole course of life in a minute, can he? Grown persons have to go on probation for six months before they can lead a different life, and half the time they lose their cud before the six months expire, and have to commence again. When it is so all fired hard for a man that is endowed with sense to break off being bad, you shouldn't expect too much from a boy. But I am doing as well as could be expected—I ain't half as bad as I was! Gosh, why don't you burn a rag? That yeast that the girl spilled on the floor smells like it was sick. I should think that bread that was raised with that yeast would smell like this cooking butter you sell to hired girls."

"Well, never you mind the cooking butter. I knew my business. If people want to use poor butter when they have company, and then blow up the grocer before falls, I can stand it if they can. But what is this I hear about

your Pa fighting a duel with the minister in your back yard, and wounding him in the leg, and then trying to drown himself in the cistern? One of your new neighbors was in here this morning, and told me there was murder in the air at your house last night, and they are going to have the police pull your place as a disorderly house. I think you were at the bottom of the whole business!"

"Oh, it's all a darned lie, and those neighbors will find they better keep still about us, or we will lie about them a little. You see, since Pa got that blacking on his face he don't go out any, and to make it pleasant for him Ma invited in a few friends to spend the evening. Ma has got up around, and the baby is a daisy, only it smells like a goat on account of drinking the goat's milk. Ma invited the minister among the rest, and after supper the men went up into Pa's library to talk. O, you think I am bad, don't you, but of the nine men at our house last night I am an angel compared with what they were when they were boys. I got into the bathroom to untangle my fish line, and it is next to Pa's room, and I could hear everything they said, but I went away 'cause I thought the conversation would hurt my morals. They would all steal, when they were boys, but darned if I ever stole. Pa has stolen over a hundred wagon loads of watermelons, one deacon used to rob orchards, another one shot tame ducks belonging to a farmer, and another tipped over grindstones in front of the village store, at night, and broke them, and ran, and another used to steal eggs, and go out in the woods and boil them, and the minister was the worst of the lot, 'cause he took a seine, with some other boys, and went to a stream where a neighbor was raising brook trout, and cleaned the stream out, and to ward off suspicion he went to the man next day and paid him a dollar to let him fish in the stream, and then kicked because there were no

trout, and the owner found the trout were stolen and laid it to some Dutch boys. I wondered, when those men were telling their experience, if they ever thought of it now when they were preaching and praying, and taking up collections. I should think they wouldn't say a boy was going to hell right off 'cause he was a little wild nowadays, when he has such an example. Well, lately, somebody has been burgling our chicken coop, and Pa loaded an old musket with rock salt, and said he would fill the fellow full of salt if he caught him, and while they were talking upstairs Ma heard a rooster squawk, and she went to the stairway and told Pa there was somebody in the hen house. Pa jumped up and told the visitors to follow him, and they would see a man running down the alley full of salt, and he rushed out with the gun, and the crowd followed him. Pa is shorter than the rest, and he passed under the first wire clothes line in the yard all right, and was going for the hen house on a jump, when his neck caught the second wire clothes line just as the minister and two of the deacons caught their necks under the other wire. You know how a wire, hitting a man on the throat, will set him back, head over appetite. Well, sir, I was looking out of the back window, and I wouldn't be positive, but I think they all turned double back somersaults, and struck on their ears. Anyway, Pa did, and the gun must have been cocked, or he struck the hammer on a stone, for it went off, and it was pointed toward the house, and three of the visitors got salted. The minister was hit the worst, one piece of salt taking him in the hind leg, and the other in the back, and he yelled as though it was dynamite. I suppose when you shoot a man with salt, it smarts, like when you get corned beef brine on your chapped hands. They all yelled, and Pa seemed to have been knocked silly, some way, for he pranced around and

seemed to think he had killed them. He swore at the wire clothes line, and then I missed Pa and heard a splash like when you throw a cat in the river, and then I thought of the cistern, and I went down and we took Pa by the collar and pulled him out. O, he was awful damp. No sir, it was no duel at all, but a naxident, and I didn't have anything to do with it. The gun wasn't loaded to kill, and



I THOUGHT OF THE CISTERNS.

the salt only went through the skin, but those men *did* yell. Maybe it was my chum that stirred up the chickens, but I don't know. He has not commenced to lead a different life yet, and he might think it would make our folks sick if nothing occurred to make them pay attention. I think where a family has been having a good deal of exercise, the way ours has, it hurts them to break off too suddenly.

But the visitors went home, real quick, after we got Pa out of the cistern, and the minister told Ma he always felt when he was in our house, as though he was on the verge of a yawning crater, ready to be engulfed any minute, and he guessed he wouldn't come any more, Pa changed his clothes and told Ma to have them wire clothes lines changed for rope ones. I think it is hard to suit Pa, don't you?"

"O, your Pa is all right. What he needs is rest. But why are you not working at the livery stable? You haven't been discharged, have you?" And the grocery man laid a little lump of concentrated lye, that looked like maple sugar, on a cake of sugar that had been broken, knowing the boy would nibble it.

"No, sir, I was not discharged, but when a livery man lends me a kicking horse to take my girl out riding, that settles it. I asked the boss if I couldn't have a quiet horse that would drive himself if I wound the lines around the whip, and he let me have one he said would go all day without driving. You know how it is, when a fellow takes a girl out riding he don't want his mind occupied holding lines. Well, I got my girl in, and we went out on the Whitefish Bay road, and it was just before dark, and we rode along under the trees, and I wound the lines around the whip, and put one arm around my girl, and patted her under the chin with my other hand, and her mouth looked so good, and her blue eyes looked up at me and twinkled as much as to dare me to kiss her, and I was all of a tremble, and then my hand wandered around by her ear and I drew her head up to me and gave her a smack. Say, that was no kind of a horse to give to a young fellow to take a girl out riding. Just as I smacked her I felt as though the buggy had been struck by a pile-driver, and when I looked at the ~~buggy~~ he was running away and kicking the buggy, and the lines were dragging on the

ground. I was scared, I tell you. I wanted to jump out, but my girl threw her arms around my neck and screamed, and said we would die together, and just as we were going to die the buggy struck a fence and the horse broke loose and went off, leaving us in the buggy tumbled down by the dash board, but we were not hurt. The old horse stopped and went to chewing grass, and looked up at me as though he wanted to say 'philopena.' I tried to catch him, but he wouldn't catch, and then we waited till dark and walked home, and I told the livery man what I thought of such treatment, and he said if I had attended to my driving and not kissed the girl, I would have been all right. He said I ought to have told him I wanted a horse that wouldn't shy at kissing, but how did I know I was going to get up courage to kiss her. A livery man ought to take it for granted that when a young fellow goes out with his girl he is going to kiss her, and give him a horse according. But I quit him at once. I won't work for a man that hasn't got sense. Gosh! What kind of maple sugar is that? Jerusalem! Whew, give me some water! O, my, it is taking the skin off my mouth!"

The grocery man got him some water and seemed sorry that the boy had taken the lump of concentrated lye by mistake, and when the boy went out the grocery man pounded his hands on his knees and laughed, and presently he went out in front of the store and found a sign:

*FRESH LETIS, BEEN PICKED  
MORE'N A WEEK  
TUPFER'N TRIPE.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE BAD BOY A THOROUGHBRED.

"Ah, ha, you have got your deserts at last," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in with one eye black, and his nose peeled on one side, and sat down on a board across the coal scuttle, and began whistling as unconcerned as possible. "What's the matter with your eye?"

"Boy tried to gouge it out without my consent," and the bad boy took a dried herring out of the box and began peeling it. "He is in bed now, and his ma is poulticing him, and she says he will be out about the last of next week."

"O, you are going to be a prize fighter, ain't you?" said the grocery man, disgusted. "When a boy leaves a job where he is working, and goes to loafing around, he becomes a fighter the first thing. What your Pa ought to do is to bind you out with a farmer, where you would have to work all the time. I wish you would go away from here, because you look like one of these fellows that comes up before the police judge Monday morning, and gets thirty days in the house of correction. Why don't you go out and loaf around a slaughter house, where you would look appropriate?" and the grocery man took a hair brush and brushed some sugar and tea, that was on the counter, into the sugar barrel.

"Well, if you have got through with your sermon, I will toot a little on my horn," and the boy threw the remains of the herring over behind a barrel of potatoes,

and wiped his hands on a coffee sack. "If you had this black eye, and got it the way I did, it would be a more priceless gem in the crown of glory you hope to wear, than any gem you can get by putting quarters in the collection plate, with the holes filled with lead, as you did last Sunday, when I was watching you. O, didn't you look pious when you picked that filled quarter out, and held your thumb over the place where the lead was. The way of the black eye was this. I got a job tending a soda-water fountain, and last night, just before we closed, there was two or three young loafers in the place, and a girl came in for a glass of soda. Five years ago she was one of the brightest scholars in the ward school, when I was in the intermediate department. She was just as handsome as a peach, and everybody liked her. At recess she used to take my part when the boys knocked me around, and she lived near us. She had a heart as big as that cheese box, and I guess that's what's the matter. Anyway, she left school, and then it was said she was going to get married to a fellow who is now in the dude business, but he went back on her, and after awhile her ma turned her out doors, and for a year or two she was jerkin' beer in a concert saloon, until the mayor stopped concerts. She tried hard to get sewing to do, but they wouldn't have her, I guess 'cause she cried so much when she was sewing, and the tears wet the cloth she was sewing on. Once I asked Pa why Ma didn't give her some sewing to do, and he said for me to dry up and never speak to her if I met her on the street. It seemed tough to pass her on the street when she had tears in her eyes as big as marbles, and not speak to her when I know her so well, and she had been so kind to me at school just 'cause the dude wouldn't marry her, but I wanted to obey Pa, so I used the walk around a block when I see her coming, 'cause I didn't want to hurt her feelings. Well,

last night she came in the store, looking pretty shabby, and wanted a glass of soda, and I gave it to her, and O, how her hand trembled when she raised the glass to her lips,



O, HOW HER HAND TREMBLED WHEN SHE RAISED THE GLASS.

and how wet her eyes were, and how pale her face was. I choked up so I couldn't speak when she handed me the nickel, and when she looked up at me and smiled just like she used to, and said I was getting to be almost a man since we went to school at the old school house, and put her handkerchief to her eyes, by gosh, my eyes got so full I couldn't tell whether it was a nickel or a losenger she gave me. Just then one of those loafers began to laugh at her,

and call her names, and say the police ought to take her up for a stray, and he made fun of her until she cried some more, and I got hot, and went around to where he was, and told him if he said another unkind word to that girl I would maul him. He laughed and asked if she was my sister, and I told him that a poor, friendless girl, who was sick and in distress, and who was insulted, ought to be every boy's sister, for a minute, and any boy who had a spark of manhood, should protect her, and then he laughed and said I ought to be one of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and he took hold of her faded shawl and pulled the weak girl against the showcase, and said something mean to her, and she looked as though she wanted to die, and I mashed that boy one right on the nose. Well, the air seemed to be full of me for a minute, 'cause he was bigger than me, and he got me down, and got his thumb in my eye. I guess he was going to take my eye out, but I turned him over and got on top, and I mauled him until he begged, but I wouldn't let him up till he asked the girl's pardon, and swore he would whip any boy that insulted her, and then I let him up, and the girl thanked me; but I told her I couldn't speak to her, 'cause she was tough, and Pa didn't want me to speak to anybody who was tough; but if anybody ever insulted her so she had to cry, that I would whip him if I had to take a club. I told Pa about it, and I thought he would be mad at me for taking the part of a girl that was tough, but, by goah, Pa hugged me, and the tears came in his eyes, and he said I had got good blood in me, and I did just right; and if I would show him the father of the boy that I whipped, Pa said he could whip the old man, and Ma said for me to find the poor girl and send her up to the house, and she would give her a job making pillow cases and night shirts. Don't it seem darn queer to you that everybody goes back on a poor girl? 'cause

she makes a mistake, and the blasted whelp that is to blame, gets a chromo? It makes me tired to think of it," and the boy got up and shook himself, and looked in the cracked mirror hanging upon a post, to see how his eye was getting along."

"Say, young fellow, you are a thoroughbred," said the grocery man, as he sprinkled some water on the asparagus and lettuce, "and you can come in here and get all the herring you want, and never mind the black eye. I wish I had it myself. Yes, it does seem tough to see people never allow a girl to reform. Now, in Bible times, the Saviour forgave Mary or somebody, I forget now what her name was, and she was a better girl than ever. What we need is more of the spirit of Christ, and the world would be better."

"What we want is about ten thousand Christs. We ought to have ten or fifteen right here in Milwaukee, and they would find plenty of business, too. But this climate seems to be too rough. Say, did I tell you about Pa and Ma having trouble?"

"No, what's the row?"

"Well, you see Ma wants to economize all she can, and Pa has been getting thinner since he quit drinking and reformed, and I have kept on growing until I am bigger than he is. Funny, ain't it, that a boy should be bigger than his Pa? Pa wanted a new suit of clothes, and Ma said she would fix him, and so she took one of my old suits and made it over for Pa; and he wore them a week before he knew it was an old suit made over, but one day he found a handful of dried up angle worms in the pistol pocket that I had forgot when I was fishing, and Pa laid the angle worms to Ma, and Ma had to explain that she made over one of my old suits for Pa. He was mad and took them off and threw them out the back window, and swore he would

never humiliate himself by wearing his son's old clothes. Ma tried to reason with him, but he was awfully worked up, and said he was no charity hospital, and he stormed around to find his old suit of clothes, but Ma had sold them to a plaster of Paris image peddler, and Pa hadn't anything to wear, and he wanted Ma to go out in the alley and pick up the suit he threw out the window; but a rag man had picked them up and was going away, and Pa, he grabbed a linen duster and put it on and went out after the rag picker, and he run, and Pa after him; and the rag man told a policeman there was an escaped lunatic from the asylum, and he was chasing people all over the city, and the policeman took Pa by the linen duster, and pulled it off, and he was a sight when they took him to the police station. Ma and me had to go down and bail him out, and the police lent us a tarpaulin to put over Pa, and we got him home, and he is wearing his summer pants while the tailor makes him a new suit of clothes. I think Pa is too excitable, and too particular. I never kicked on wearing Pa's old clothes, and I think he ought to wear mine now. Well, I must go down to the sweetened wind factory, and jerk soda," and the boy went out and hung up a sign in front of the store:

*SPINAGE FOR GREENS, THAT  
THE CAT HAS MADE  
A NEST IN OVER SUNDAY.*

## CHAPTER XIV.

ENTERTAINMENT BY C. A. DELEATH.

"Well, how's your eye?" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he blew in with the wind on the day of the cyclone, and left the door open. "Say, shut that door. You want to blow everything out of the store! Had any more fights, protecting girls from dudes?"

"No, everything is quiet so far. I guess since I have got a record as a fighter, the boys will be careful who they insult when I am around. But I have had the hardest week I ever experienced, jerking soda for the Young Men's Christian Association," said the boy, as he peeled a banana.

"What do you mean, boy? Don't cast any reflections on such a noble Association. They don't drink, do they?"

"Drink! O, no! They don't drink anything intoxicating, but when it comes to soda they flood themselves. You know there has been a National Convention of delegates from all the Young Men's Christian Associations of the whole country, about three hundred, here, and our store is right on the street where they passed four times a day, and I never saw such appetites for soda. There has been one continual fizz in our store since Wednesday. The boss wanted me to play it on some of them by putting some brandy in with the perfumery a few times, but I wouldn't do it. I guess a few weeks ago, before I had led a different life, I wouldn't had to be asked twice to play the game on anybody. But a man can't buy soda of me and be perfectly

safe. Of course, if a man wants, when I ask him what favor he wants, and says 'never mind,' I know enough to put in brandy. That is different. But I wouldn't smuggle it into a man for nothing. This Christian Association Convention has caused a coldness between Pa and Ma though."

"How's that? Your Pa isn't jealous, is he?" and the grocery man came around from behind the counter to get the latest gossip to retail to the hired girls who traded with him.

"Jealous nothin'," said the boy, as he took a few raisins out of a box. "You see, the delegates were shuffled out to all the church members to take care of, and they dealt two to Ma, and she never told Pa anything about it. They came to supper the first night, and Pa didn't get home, so when they went to the Convention in the evening, Ma gave them a night key, and Pa came home from the boxing match about eleven o'clock, and Ma was asleep. Just as Pa got most of his clothes off, he heard somebody fumbling at the front door, and he thought it was burglars. Pa has got nerve enough, when he is on the inside of the house and the burglars are on the outside. He opened a window and looked out and saw two suspicious looking characters trying to pick the lock with a skeleton key, and he picked up a new slopjar that Ma had bought when we moved, cover and all, and dropped it down right between the two delegates. Gosh, if it had hit one of them, there would have been the solemnest funeral you ever saw. Just as it struck, they got the door opened and came into the hall, and the wind was blowing pretty hard and they thought a cyclone had taken the cupola off the house. They were talking about being miraculously saved, and trying to strike a match on their wet pants, when Pa went to the head of the stairs and pushed over a wire stand filled with potted

plants, which struck pretty near the delegates, and one of them said the house was coming down sure, and they better go into the cellar, and they went down and got behind the furnace. Pa called me up and wanted me to go down cellar and tell the burglars we were onto them, and for them to get out, but I wasn't very well, so Pa locked his door and went to bed. I guess it must have been half-an-hour before Pa's cold feet woke Ma up, and then Pa told her not to move for her life, cause there were two of the savagest looking burglars that ever was, rumaging over the house. Ma smelled Pa's breath to see if he had got to drinking again, and then she got up and hid her orade watch in her shoes, and her Onalaska diamond ear-rings in the Bible, where she said no burglar would ever find them, and Pa and Ma laid awake till daylight, and then Pa said he wasn't afraid, and he and Ma went down cellar. Pa stood on the bottom stair and looked around, and one of the delegates said, 'Mister, is the storm over, and is your family safe?' and Ma recognized the voice and said, 'Why, it's one of the delegates. What are you doing down there?' and Pa said, 'What's a delegate?' and then Ma explained it, and Pa apologized, and the delegate said it was no matter as they had enjoyed themselves real well in the cellar. Ma was mortified most to death, and the delegate told her it was all right. She was mad at Pa, first, but when she saw the broken slop-bowl on the front steps, and the potted plants in the hall, she wanted to kill Pa, and I guess she would only for the society of the delegates. She couldn't help telling Pa that he was a bald headed old fool, but Pa didn't retaliate—he is too much of a gentleman to talk back in compnay. All he said was that a woman who is old enough to have delegates sawed off on her, ought to have sense enough to tell her husband, and then they all drifted off into conversation about the con-

vention and the boxing match, and everything was all right on the surface; but after breakfast, when the delegates went to the convention, I noticed Pa went right down town and bought a new slop-jar and some more plants. Pa and Ma didn't speak all the forenoon, and I guess they wouldn't up to this time, only Ma's bonnet came home from the milliner's and she had to have some money to pay for it. Then she called Pa 'pet,' and that settled it. When Ma calls Pa 'pet,' that is twenty-five dollars. 'Dear, old darling,' means fifty dollars. But, say, those christian young men do a heap of good, don't they. Their presence seems to make people better. Some boys down by the store were going to tie a can on a dog's tail, yesterday, and somebody said, 'here comes the Christian Association,' and those bad boys let the dog go. They tried to find the dog after the crowd had got by, but the dog knew his business. Well, I must go down and charge the soda fountain for a picnic that is expected from the country."

"Hold on a minute," said the grocery man as he wound a piece of brown paper around a cob and stuck it in a syrup jug he had just filled for a customer, and then licked his fingers. "I want to ask you a question. What has caused you to change so from being bad. You were about as bad as they make 'em, up to a few weeks ago, and now you seem to have a soul, and get in your work doing good about as well as any boy in town. What is it that ails you?"

"Oh, sugar, I don't want to tell," said the boy, as he blushed and wiggled around on one foot, and looked silly; "but if you won't laugh, I will tell you. It is my girl that has made me good. It may be only temporary. If she goes back on me I may be tough again; but if she continues to hold out faithful I shall be a daisy all the time. Say, did you ever love a girl? It would do you good, if you

loved anybody regular old fashioned the way I do, people could send little children here to trade, and you wouldn't palm off any wilted vegetables on to them, or give them short weight—if you was in love, and felt that the one you loved saw every act of yours, and you could see her eyes every minute, you would throw away anything that was spoiled, and not try to sell it, for fear you would offend her. I don't think any man is fit to do business honestly unless he is in love, or has been in love once. Now I



I COULD SEE MY GIRL'S BANGS RAISE RIGHT UP.

couldn't do anything wrong if I tried, because I should hear the still small voice of my girl saying to me 'Hennery, let up on that.' I slipped up on a banana peel, yesterday,

and hurt myself, and I was just going to say something efful, and I could see my girl's bangs raise right up, and there was a pained look in her face, and a tear in her eye, and, by gosh, I just smiled and looked tickled till her hair went down and the smile came back again to her lips, though it hurt me like blazes where I struck the sidewalk. I was telling Pa about it, and asked him if he ever felt as though his soul was going right out toward somebody, and he said he did once on a steamboat excursion; but he ate a lemon and got over it. Pa thinks it is my liver, and wants me to take pills, but I tell you, boss, it has struck in me too deep for pills, unless it is one that weighs about a hundred and forty pounds, and wears a hat with a feather on. Say, if my girl should walk right into a burning lake of red-hot lava, and beckon me to follow, I would take a hop, skip and jump, and — ”

“O give us a rest,” said the grocery man, as he took a basin of water and sprinkled the floor, preparatory to sweeping out. “You have got the worst case I ever saw, and you better go out and walk around a block,” and the boy went out, and forgot to hang out any sign.

## CHAPTER XV.

## HE TURNED DOWN

You look pretty sleepy," said the grocery man to the bed boy, as he came in the store yawning, and stretched himself out on the counter with his head on a piece of brown wrapping paper, in reach of a box of raisins, "what's the matter? Been sitting up with your girl all night?"

"Now! I wish I had. Wakefulness with my girl is sweeter and more restful than sleep. No, this is the result of being a dutiful son, and I am tired. You see Pa and Ma have separated. That is, not for keeps, but Pa has got frightened about burglars, and he gets up into the attic to sleep. He says it is to get fresh air, but he knows better. Ma has got so accustomed to Pa's snoring that she can't go to sleep without it, and the first night Pa left she didn't sleep a wink, and yesterday I was playing on an old accordion that I traded a dog collar for after our dog was poisoned, and when I touched the low notes I noticed Ma dozed off to sleep, it sounded so much like Pa's snore, and last night Ma made me set up and play for her to sleep. She rested splendid, but I am all broke up, and I sold the accordion this morning to the watchman who watches our block. It is queer what a different effect music will have on different people. While Ma was sleeping the sleep of innocence under the influence of my counterfeit of Pa's snore, the night watchman was broke of his rest by it, and

he bought it of me to give it to the son of an enemy of his. Well, I have quit jerking soda."

"No, you don't tell me," said the grocery man, as he moved the box of raisins out of reach. "You never will amount to anything unless you stick to one trade or profession. A rolling hen never catches the early angle-worm."

"O, but I am all right now. In the soda water business, there is no chance for genius to rise unless the soda fountain explodes. It is all wind, and one gets tired of the constant fizz. He feels that he is a fraud, and when he puts a little syrup in a tumbler, and fires a little sweetened wind and water in it until the soap suds fills the tumbler, and charges ten cents for that which only costs a cent a sensitive soda jerker, who has reformed, feels that it is worse than three card monte. I couldn't stand the wear on my conscience, so I have got a permanent job as a super, and shall open the 1st of September."

"Say, what's a super? It isn't one of these free lunch places that the mayor closes at midnight, is it?" and the grocery man looked sorry.

"O, thunder, you want salt on you. A super is an adjunct of the stage. A supe is a fellow that assists the stars and things, carrying chairs and taking up carpets, and sweeping the sand off the stage after a dancer has danced a jig, and he brings beer for the actors, and helps lace up corsets, and anything he can do to add to the effect of the play. Privately, now, I have been acting as a supe for a long time, on the sly, and my folks didn't know anything about it, but since I reformed and decided to be good, I felt it my duty to tell Ma and Pa about it. The news broke Ma all up, at first, but Pa said some of the best actors in this country were supers once, and some of them were now, and he thought suping would be the making of me."

Ma thought going on the stage would be my ruination. She said the theater was the hot-bed of sin, and brought more ruin than the church could head off. But when I told her that they always gave a supe two or three extra tickets for his family, she said the theater had some redeeming features, and when I said my entrance upon the stage would give me a splendid opportunity to get the recipe for face powder from the actresses, for Ma, and I could find out how the actresses managed to get number four feet into number one shoes, Ma said she wished I would commence singing right off. Ma says there are some things about a theater that are not so all-fired bad, and she wants me to get seats for the first comic opera that comes along. Pa wants it understood with the manager that a supe's father has a right to go behind the scenes to see that no harm befalls him, but I know what Pa wants. He may seem pious, and all that, but he likes to look at ballet girls better than any meek and lowly follower I ever see, and some day you will hear music in the air. Pa thinks theaters are very bad, when he has to pay a dollar for a reserved seat, but when he can get in for nothing as a relative of one of the 'perfeah', the theater has many redeeming qualities. Pa and Ma think I am going into the business fresh and green, but I know all about it. When I played with McCullough here once—"

"Oh, what are you giving us," said the grocery man in disgust, "when you played with McCullough! What did you do?"

"What did I do? Why, you old seed cucumber, the whole play centered around me. Do you remember the scene in the Roman forum, where McCullough addressed the populace of Rome? I was the populace. Don't you remember a small fellow standing in front of the Roman center taking it in; with a night shirt on, with bare legs

and arms! That was me, and everything depended on me. Suppose I had gone off the stage at the critical moment, or laughed when I should have looked fierce at the inspired words of the Roman senator, it would have been a dead give away on McCullough. As the populace of Rome I consider myself a glittering success, and Me took me by the hand when they carried Caesar's dead body out, and he said, 'us three did ourselves proud.' Such praise from McCullough is seldom accorded to a supe. But I don't consider the populace of the imperial city of Rome my master piece. Where I excel is in coming out before the curtain between the acts, and unhooking the carpet. Some supes go out and turn their backs to the audience, showing patches on their pants, and rip up the carpet with no style about them, and the dust flies, and the boys yell 'supe,' and the supe gets nervous and forgets his cue, and goes off tumbling over the carpet, and the orchestra leader is afraid the supe will fall on him. But I go out with a quiet dignity that is only gained by experience, and I take hold of the carpet the way Hamlet takes up the skull of Yorick, and the audience is paralyzed. I kneel down on the carpet, to unhook it, in a devotional sort of a way that makes the audience bow their heads as though they were in church, and before they realize that I am only a supe I have the carpet unhooked and march out the way a 'Pisecopal minister does when he goes out between the acts at church to change his shirt. They never 'guy' me, 'cause I act well my part. But I kick on holding dogs for actresses. Some supes think they are made if they can hold a dog, but I have an ambition that a pug dog will not fill. I held Mary Anderson's end of gum once, while she went on the stage, and when she came off and took her gum her fingers touched mine and I had to run my fingers in my hair to warm them, like a fellow does when he has been snow-

balling. Gosh, but she would freeze ice cream without salt. I shall be glad when the theatrical season opens, 'cause we actors get tired laying off."

"Well, I'd like to go behind the scenes with you some night," said the grocery man, offering the bad boy an



orange to get solid with him, in view of future complimentary tickets. "No danger, is there?"

"No danger if you keep off the grass. But you'd a dink to see my Sunday school teacher one Saturday night last summer. He keeps books in a store, and is pretty easy

at the theater, and wanted me to get him behind the scenes one night, and another supe wanted to go to the sparring match, and I thought it wouldn't be any harm to work my teacher in, so I got him a job that night to hold the dogs for Uncle Tom's show. He was in one of the wings holding the chains, and the dogs were just anxious to go on, and it was all my teacher could do to hold them. I told him to wind the chains around his wrists, and he did so, and just then Eliza began to skip across the ice, and we sicked the blood hounds on before my teacher could unwind the chains from his wrists, and the dogs pulled him right out on the stage, on his stomach, and drawed him across, and he jerked one dog and kicked him in the stomach, and the dog turned on my teacher and took a mouthful of his coat tail and shook it, and I guess the dog got some meat, anyway the teacher climbed up a step-ladder, and the dogs tread him, and the step-ladder fell down, and we grabbed the dogs and put some court plaster on my teacher's nose, where the fire extinguisher peeled it, and he said he would go home, 'cause the theater was demoralizing in its tendencies. I 'possum it was not right, but when the teacher stood up to hear our Sunday school lesson the next day, 'cause he was tired where the dog bit him, I said 'nick-em,' in a whisper, when his back was turned, and he jumped clear over to the Bible class, and put his hands around to his coat tail as though he thought the Uncle Tom's Cabin party were giving a matinee in the church. The Sunday school lesson was about the dog's licking the sores of Lazarus, and the teacher said we must not confound the good dogs of Bible time with the savage beasts of the present day, that would shake the daylight out of Lazarus, and make him climb the cedars of Lebanon quicker than you could say Jack Robinson, and go off showing a cud of bitter reflection on Lazarus' coat tail. I don't think a Sun-

day school teacher ought to bring up personal reminiscences before a class of children, do you? Well, some time next fall you put on a clean shirt and a pair of sheet iron pants, with stove legs on the inside, and I will take you behind the scenes to see some good moral show. In the meantime, if you have an occasion to talk with Pa, tell him that Booth, and Barrett, and Keene commenced on the stage as supers, and Salvini roasted peanuts in the lobby of some theater. I want our folks to feel that I am taking the right course to become a star. I prythee ~~an~~ reservoir. I go hence! but to return. *Avaunt!*" And the boy walked out on his toes ~~a~~ is Booth.

## CHAPTER XVI.

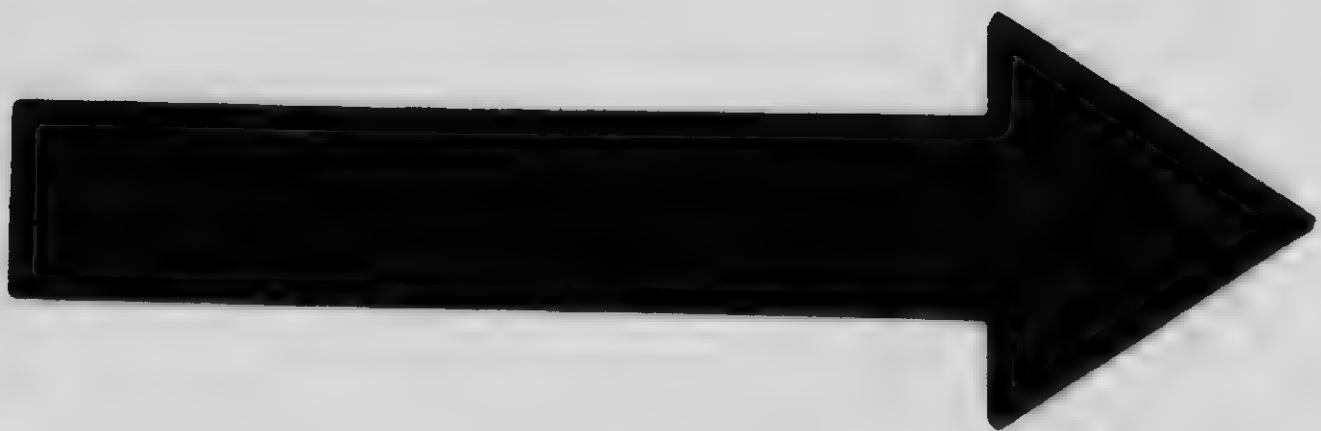
## UNCLE EZRA PAYS A VISIT.

"I hear your Uncle Ezra is here on a visit," said the grocery man to the bad boy. "I suppose you have been having a high old time. There is nothing that does a boy more good than to have a nice visit with a good uncle, and hear him tell about old times when he and the boy's father were boys together."

"Well I don't know about it," said the boy, as he took a stick of macaroni, and began to blow paper wads through it at a wood sawyer, who was filing a saw outside the door. "When a boy who has been tough has got his pins all set to reform, I don't think it does him any good to have a real nice Uncle come to the house visiting. Any way, that's my experience. I have backslid the worst way, and it's going to take me a month after Uncle Ezra goes away to climb up to the grace that I have fallen from. It is darn discouraging," said the boy, as he looked up to the ceiling in an innocent sort of way, and hid the macaroni under his coat when the wood sawyer who had been hit in the neck, dropped his saw and got up mad.

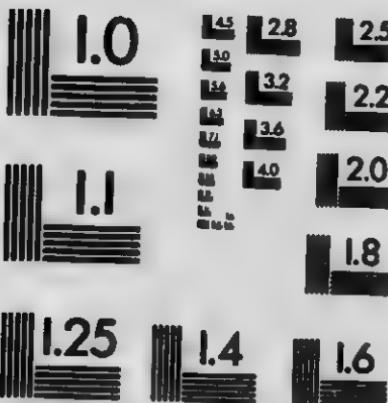
"What's the trouble? Your uncle has the reputation where he lives of being one of the pillars of society. But you can't tell about these fellows when they get away from home. Does he drink?"

"No, he don't drink; but as near as I can figure, he and Pa were about the worst p'iks in the box, when they were young. I don't want you to repeat it, but when Pa and



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Ma were married they eloped. Yes, sir—actually ran away and defied their parents—and they had to hide about a week, for fear Ma's father would fill Pa so full of cold lead that he would sink if he fell in the water. Pa has



GRANDFATHER'S SHOT GUN.

been kicked over the fence and chased down alleys dozens of times by Ma's grandfather, when he was sparkling Ma, and Ma was a terror, too, 'cause her mother couldn't do anything with her, though she is awful precise now, and

wants everybody to be too good. Why, Ma's mother used to warm her ears, and shake the daylights out of her, but it didn't do any good. She was mashed on Pa, and there was no cure for her except to have Pa prescribed for her as a husband, and they ran away. Uncle Ezra told me all about it. Ma hain't got any patience with girls now days that have minds of their own about fellows, and she thinks she knows all about it. But when people get in love it is the same now as when Pa and Ma were trying to keep out of the reach of my grandfather's shot gun. But Pa and Uncle Ezra and Ma are good friends, and they talk over old times and have a big laugh. I guess Uncle Ezra was too much for Pa in joking when they were boys, 'cause Pa told me that all rules against joking were suspended while Uncle Ezra was here, and for me to play anything on him I could. I told Pa I was trying to lead a different life, but he said what I wanted to do was to make Uncle Ezra think of old times, and the only way was to keep him on the ragged edge. I thought if there was anything I could do to make it pleasant for my Uncle, it was my duty to do it, so I fixed the bed slats on the spare bed so they would fall down at 2 A. M. the first night, and then I retired. At two o'clock I heard the awfulest noise in the spare room, and a howling and screaming, and I went down to meet Uncle Ezra in the hall, and he asked me what was the matter in there, and I asked him if he didn't sleep in the spare room, and he said no, that Pa and Ma was in there, and he slept in their room. Then we went in the spare room and you'd dide to see Pa. Ma had jumped out when the slats first fell, and was putting her hair up in curl papers when we got in, but Pa was all tangled up in the springs and things. His head had gone down first, and the mattress and quilt rolled over him, and he was almost smothered, and we had to take the bedstead

down to get him out the way you have to unharness a horse when he runs away and falls down before you can get him up. Pa was mad, but Uncle Ezra laughed at him, and told him he was only foundered, and all he wanted was a bran mash and some horse liniment, and he would come out all right. Uncle Ezra went out into the hall to get a pail of water to throw on Pa, 'cause he said Pa was afire, when Pa asks me why in blazes I didn't fix the other bed slats, and I told him I didn't know they were going to change beds, and then Pa said don't let it occur again. Pa lays everything to me. He is the most changeable man I ever saw. He told me to do everything Uncle Ezra wanted me to do, and then, when I helped Uncle Ezra to play a joke on Pa, he was mad. Say, I don't think this world is run right, do you? I haven't got much time to talk to you to-day, 'cause Uncle Ezra and me are going fishing, but don't it strike you that it is queer that parents trouble boys for doing just what they did themselves? Now, I have got a friend whose father is a lawyer. That lawyer would warm his boy well if he should tell a lie or associate with anybody that was bad, and yet the lawyer will defend a man he knows is guilty of stealing, and get him clear and take the money he got from the thief, who stole it, to buy the same boy a new coat to wear to church, and he will defend a man who committed murder, and make an argument to the jury that will bring tears to their eyes, and they will clear the murderer. Queer, ain't it? And say, how is it that we send missionaries to Bur-mah, to convert them from heathenism, and the same vessel that takes the missionaries there carries from Boston a cargo of tin gods to sell to the heathen? Why wouldn't it be better to send the missionaries to Boston? I think the more a boy learns the more he gets mixed."

"Well, how's your theatre? Have any of the great

actors supported you lately?" said the grocery man, to change the subject.

"No, we are all off on vacations. Booth and Barrett, and lots of the stars, are gone to Europe, and the rest work down to less high-toned places. Some of the theatre



MY UNCLE HERB IS PRETTY BOUGH.

girls are waiters at summer resorts, and lots are visiting relatives on farms. I tell you, it makes a difference whether the relatives are visiting you or you are visiting them. Actors and actresses feel awfully when an old

granger comes to town where they are playing, and wants to see them. They are ashamed of his homespun clothes, and cowhide boots, and they want to meet him in an alley somewhere, or in the basement of the theatre, so other actors will not laugh at their rough relatives, but when the season is over an actor who can remember a relative out on a farm, is tickled to death, and the granger is all right enough there, and the actor does not think of the rough nutmeg grater hands, and the blistered nose, as long as the granger relative will put up fried pork and things, and 'support' the actor. My Uncle Ezra is pretty rough and it makes me tired sometimes when I am down town with him to have him go into a store where there are girl clerks and ask what things are for, that I know he don't want, and make the girls blush, but he is a good-hearted old man, and he and me are going to make a mint of money during the vacation. He lives near a summer resort hotel, and has a stream that is full of minnows, and we are going to catch minnows and sell them to the dudes for fish bait. He says some of the fools will pay ten cents apiece for minnows, so if we sell a million minnows, we make a fortune. I am coming back in September, and will buy out your grocery. Say, let me have a pound of raisins, and I'll pay you when I sell my uncle's minnows."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE DISCOURSES THEOLOGY.

"What are you sitting there for a half-an-hour for, staring at vacancy?" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he sat on the stool by the stove one of these foggy mornings, when everybody feels like quarreling, with his fingers clasped around his knee, looking as though he did not know enough to last him to bed. "What you thinking about anyway?"

"I was wondering where you would have been to-day if Noah had run his ark into such a fog as this, and there had been no fog-horn on Mount Ararat, and he had passed by with his excursion and not made a landing, and had floated around on the freshet until all the animals starved, and the ark had struck a snag and burst a hole in its bottom. I tell you, we can all congratulate ourselves that Noah happened to blunder on that high ground. If that ark had been lost, either by being foundered, or being blowed up by the Fenians because Noah was an Englishman, it would have been cold work trying to populate this world. In that case another Adam and Eve would have to be made out of dirt and water, and they might have gone wrong again and failed to raise a family, and where would we have been. I tell you when I think of the narrow escapes we have had, it is a wonder to me that we have got along as well as we have."

"Well, when did you get out of the asylum?" said the grocery man, who had been standing back with his mouth

open, looking at the boy as though he was crazy. "What you want is to have your head soaked. You are getting so you reach out too far with that small mind of yours. In about another year you will want to run this world yourself. I don't think you are reforming very much. It is wicked for a boy your size to argue about such things. Your folks better send you to college."

"What do I want to go to college for, and be a heartless haser, and a poor baseball player? I can be bad enough at home. The more I read, the more I think. I don't believe I can ever be good enough to go to heaven anyway, and I guess I will go into the newspaper business where they don't have to be good, and where they have passes everywhere. Do you know, I think when I was built they left out a cog wheel or something in my head. I can't think like some boys. I get to thinking about Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and of the Dude with the cloven hoof that flirted with Eve, and treated her and Adam to the dried apples, and I can't think of them as some boys do, with a fig leaf polonaise, and fig leaf vests. I imagine them dressed up in the latest style. I know it is wrong, but that is what a poor boy has to suffer who has an imagination, and where did I get the imagination? This confounded imagination of mine shows me Adam with a plug hat on, just like our minister wears, and a stand-up collar, and tight pants, and peaked-toed shoes, and Eve is pictured to me with a crushed-angle-worm colored dress, and brown striped stockings, and newspapers in her dress to make it stick out, and a hat with dandelions on, and a red parasol, and a lace handkerchief, which she puts to her lips and winks with her left eye to the meeker who is standing by the corner of the house, in an attitude, while the tail with the dart on the end is wound around the rain water barrel so Eve won't see it and get scared.

Say don't you think it is better for a boy to think of our first parents with clothes on, than to think of them almost naked, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, with nothing but fig leaves pinned on? I want to do right, as near as I can, but I had rather think of them dressed like our folks are to-day, than to think of them in a cyclone with leaves for wearing apparel. Say, it is wrong to fight, but don't you think if Adam had put on a pair of boxing gloves, when he found the devil was getting too fresh about the place, and knocked him out in a couple of rounds, and pasted him in the nose, and fired him out of the summer garden, that it would have been a big thing for this world. Now, honest?"

"Look-a-here," said the grocery man, who had been looking at the boy in dismay, "You better go right home, and let your Ma fix up some warm drink for you, and put you to bed. You are all wrong in the head, and if you are not attended to you will have brain fever. I tell you, boy, you are in danger. Come, I will go home with you."

"O, danger nothin'. I am just telling you how things look to a boy who has not got the facilities for being too good in his youth. Some boys can take things as they read them, and not think any for themselves, but I am a Thinker from Thinkerville, and my imagination plays the dickens with me. There is nothing I read about old times, but what I compare it with the same line of business at the present day. Now when I think of the fishermen of Galilee, drawing their seines, I wonder what they would have done if there had been a law against hauling seines, as there is in Wisconsin to-day, and I can see a constable with a warrant for the arrest of the Galilee fishermen, snatching the old apostles and taking them to the police station in a patrol wagon. I know it is wrong to think like that, but how can I help it? Say, suppose those fishermen

had been out hauling their seines, and our minister should come along with his good clothes on, his jointed rod, his nickel-plated reel, and his silk fish line, and his patent fish hook, and put a frog on the hook and cast his line near the Galilee fishermen and go to trolling for bass. What do you suppose the lone fisherman of the Bible times would



I KNOW IT'S WRONG TO THINK SO, BUT HOW CAN I HELP IT?

have thought about the gall of the jointed rod fisherman? Do you suppose they would have thrown stones in the water where he was trolling, or would they have told him there was good trolling around a point about half a mile up the shore, where they knew he wouldn't get a bite in a week, the way a fellow at Muskego Lake lied to our minister

a spell ago? I tell you, boss, it is a sad thing for a boy to have an imagination," and the boy put his other knee in the sling made by the clenched fingers of both hands, and waited for the grocery man to argue with him.

"I wish you would go away from here. I am afraid of you," said the grocery man. "I would give anything if your Pa or the minister would come in and have a talk with you. Your mind is wandering," and the grocery man went to the door and looked up and down the street to see if somebody wouldn't come in and watch the crazy boy, while he went to breakfast.

"O, Pa and the minister can't make a first payment on me. Pa gets mad when I ask questions, and the minister thinks I am past redemption. Pa said yesterday that baldness was caused, in every case, by men's wearing plug hats, and when I asked him where the good Elijah (whom the boys called 'go up old bald head,' and the bears had a free lunch on them), got his plug hat, Pa said school was dismissed and I could go. When the minister was telling me about the good Elijah going up through the clouds in a chariot of fire, and I asked the minister what he thought Elijah would have thought if he had met our Sunday school superintendent coming down through the clouds on a bicycle, he put his hand on my head and said my liver was all wrong. Now, I will leave it to you if there was anything wrong about that? Say, do you know what I think is the most beautiful thing in the Bible?"

"No, I don't," said the grocery man, "and if you want to tell it, I will listen just five minutes, and then I am going to shut up the store and go to breakfast. You make me tired."

"Well, I think the finest thing is that story about the prodigal son, and where the boy took all the money he could scrape up and went out West to paint the town red. He

spent his money in riotous living, and saw everything that was going on, and got full of benzine, and struck all the gangs of toughs, both male and female, and his stomach went back on him, and he had malaria, and finally he got to be a cowboy, herding hogs, and had to eat hucks that the pigs didn't want, and got pretty low down. Then he thought it was a pretty good scheme to be getting around



FINALLY HE GOT TO BE A COWBOY, HERDING HOGS.

home, where they had three meals a day, and spring mattresses; and he started home, beating him way on trains, and he didn't know whether the old man would receive him with open arms or pointed boots; but the old man came down to the depot to meet him, and right there,

before the passengers, and the conductor and brakemen, he wasn't ashamed of his boy, though he was ragged, and looked as though he had been on the war path; and the old man fell on his neck and wept, and took him home in a hack, and had veal pot pie for dinner. That's what I call sense. A good many men now days would have put the police on the tramp and had him ordered out of town. What, are you going to close up the store? Well, I will see you later. I want to talk with you about something that is weighing on my mind," and the boy got out just in time to save his coat tail from being caught in the door, and when the grocery man came back from breakfast he found a sign in front:

**THIS STORE IS CLOSED TILL  
FURTHER NOTICE.  
SHERIFF.**

## CHAPTER XVIII

## THE DEPARTED BOONIE.

"Why don't you take an ice pick and clean the dirt out from under your finger nails?" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came into the store and stroked the cat the wrong way as she lay in the sun on the counter, on a quire of manilla paper.

"Can't remove the dirt for thirty days—it is an emblem of mourning. Had a funeral at our house, yesterday," and the boy took a pickle out of a tub and put it in the cat's mouth, and shut her teeth together on it, and then went to the showcase, while the grocery man, whose back had been turned during the pickle exercise, thought by the way the cat jumped into the dried apple barrel and began to paw and scratch with all four of her feet, and yowl, that she was going to have a fit.

"I hadn't heard about it," said the grocery man, as he took the cat by the neck and tossed her out in the back shed into an old oyster box full of sawdust, with a parting injunction that if she was going to have fits she had better go out where there was plenty of fresh air. "Death is always a sad thing to contemplate. One day we are full of health and joy and cold victuals, and the next we are screwed down in a box, a few words are said over our remains, a few tears shed, and there is a race to see who shall get back from the cemetery first; and though we may think we are an important factor in the world's progress, and sometimes feel as though it would be unable to put up

margins, and have to stop the deal, the world goes right along, and it must annoy people who die to realize that they don't count for game. The greatest man in the world is only a nine spot when he is dead because somebody else takes the trick the dead man ought to have taken. But, say, who is dead at your house?"

"Our rooster! Take care, don't you hit me with that canvassed ham!" said the boy as the grocery man looked mad to learn that there was nobody dead but a rooster, when he had preached such a sermon on the subject. "Yes, how soon we are forgotten when we are gone. Now, you would have thought that rooster's hen would have remained faithful to him for a week at least. I have watched them all the spring, and I never saw a more perfect picture of devotion than that between the bantam rooster and his hen. They were constantly together and there was nothing too good for her. He would dig up angle worms and call her, and when she came up on a gallop and saw the great big worm on the ground, she would look so proud of her rooster, and he would straigthen up and look as though he was saying to her, 'I'm a daisy,' and then she would look at him as if she would like to bite him, and just as she was going to pick up the worm he would snatch it and swallow it himself, and chuckle and walk around and be full of business, as though wondering why she didn't take the worm after he had dug it for her, and then the hen would look disappointed at first, and then she would look resigned, as much as to say, 'Worms are too rich for my blood anyway, and the poor dear rooster needs them more than I do, because he has to do all the crowing;' and she would go off and find a grasshopper and eat it on the sly for fear he would see her and complain because she didn't divide. O, I have never seen anything that seemed to me so human as the relations between that rooster and

hen. He seemed to try to do everything for her. He would make her stop cackling when she laid an egg, and he would try to cackle, and crow over it as though he had laid it, and she would get off in a corner and cluck in a modest, retiring manner, as though she wished to convey the idea to the servant girls in the kitchen that the rooster had to do all the hard work, and she was only a useless appendage, fit only for society and company for him. But I was disgusted with him when the poor hen was setting. The first week that she sat on the eggs he seemed to get along first-rate, because he had a couple of flower beds to dig up, which a press of business had caused him to neglect before, and a couple of neighbors' gardens to destroy, so he seemed to be glad to have his hen retire to her boudoir to set, but after he had been shooed out of the gardens and flower beds he seemed to be nervous, and evidently wanted to be petted, and he would go near the hen and she would seem to tell him to go and take a walk around the block, because she hadn't time to leave her business, and if she didn't attend to it they would have a lot of spoiled eggs on their hands, and no family to bring up. He would scold, and seem to tell her that it was all foolishness, that for his part he didn't want to hear a lot of chickens squawking around. He would seem to argue with her that a brood of chickens would be a dead give-away on them both, and they would be at once classed as old folks, while if they were alone in the world they would be spring chickens, and could go in young society, but the hen would scold back, and tell him he ought to be ashamed of himself to talk that way, and he would go off mad, and sulk around a spell, and then go to a neighbor's hen house and sometimes he wouldn't come back till the next day. The hen would be sorry she had spoken so cross, and would seem pained at his going away and would look anxiously for his return, and when he came

back after being out in the rain all night, she would be solicitous after his health, and tell him he ought to wrap something around him, but he acted as though he didn't care for his health, and he would go out again and get chilled through. Finally the hen come off the nest with ten chickens, and the rooster seemed very proud, and when anybody came out to have a look at them he would crow, and seemed to say they were all his chickens, though the hen was a long time hatching them, and if it had been him that was setting on them he could have hatched them out in a week, or died a trying. But the exposure told on him, and he went into a decline, and one morning we found him dead. Do you know, I never see a hen that seemed to realize a calamity as she did. She looked pale, and her eyes looked red, and she seemed to be utterly crushed. If the chickens, which were so young they could not realize that they were little orphans, became noisy, and got to pulling and hauling over a worm, and conducted themselves in an unseemly manner she would talk to them in hen language, with tears in her eyes, and it was a picture of woe. But the next day a neighboring rooster got to looking through the fence from the alley, and trying to flirt with her. At first she was indignant, and seemed to tell him he ought to go about his business, and leave her alone, but the dude kept clucking, and pretty soon the widowed hen edged up toward the fence, and asked him to come in, but the hole in the fence was too small for him, and then the chickens went out in the alley, and the hen followed them out. I shall always think she told the chickens to go out, so she would have an excuse to go after them, and flirt with the rooster, and I think it is a perfect shame. She is out in the alley half the time, and I could cuff her. It seems to me wrong to so soon forget a deceased rooster, but I suppose a hen can't be any more than

human. Say, you don't want to buy a dead rooster do you? You could pick it and sell it to somebody that owes you, for a spring chicken.

"No, I don't want any deceased poultry, that died of grief, and you better go home and watch your hen, or you will be bereaved some more," and the grocery man went out in the shed to see if the cat was over its fit, and when he came back the boy was gone, and after a while the grocery man saw a crowd in front of the store and he went out and found the dead rooster lying on the vegetable stand, with a paper pinned on its breast on which was a sign:

**THIS BUSTER DIED OF COLIX  
FOR SALE CHEAP  
TO BOARDING HOUSE ONLY.**

He took the dead rooster and threw it out in the street, and looked up and down the street for the bad boy, and went in and hid a raw hide where he could reach it handy.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## ONE MORE JOKE ON THE OLD MAN.

"I see your Pa wheeling the baby around a good deal lately," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in the store one evening to buy a stick of striped peppermint candy for the baby, while his Pa stopped the baby wagon out on the sidewalk and waited for the boy, with an expression of resignation on his face.

"What's got into your Pa to be nurse girl this hot weather?"

"O, we have had a circus at our house," said the boy, as he came in after putting the candy in the baby's hand. "You see, Uncle Ezra came back from Chicago, where he had been to sell some cheese, and he stopped over a couple of days with us, and he said we must play one more joke on Pa before he went home. We played it, and it is a wonder I am alive, because I never saw Pa so mad in my life. Now this is the last time I go into any jokes on shares. If I play any more jokes I don't want any old uncle to give me away."

"What is it?" said the grocery man, as he took a stool and sat out by the front door beside the boy who was trying to eat a box of red raspberries on the sly.

"Well, uncle Ezra and me bribed the nurse girl to dress up the baby one evening in some old, dirty baby clothes, belonging to our wash woman's baby, and we put it in a basket and placed the basket on the front door step, and put a note in the basket and addressed it to Pa. We had

the nurse girl stay out in front, by the basement stairs, so the baby couldn't get away and she rung the bell and got behind something. Ma and Pa, and Uncle Ezra and me were in the back parlor when the bell rung, and Ma told me to go to the door, and I brought in the basket, and set it down, and told Pa there was a note in it for him. Ma, she came up and looked at the note as Pa tore it open, and Uncle Ezra looked in the basket and sighed. Pa read part of the note and stopped and turned pale, and sat down, then Ma read some of it, and she didn't feel very well, and she leaned against the piano and grated her teeth. The note was in a girl's handwriting, and was like this:

"OLD BALD HEADED PHT:—

You will have to take care of your child, because I cannot. Bring it up tenderly, and don't, for heaven's sake, send it to the Foundling Asylum. I shall go drown myself.

Your loving,

ALMIRA."

"What did your Ma say?" said the grocery man, becoming interested.

"O, Ma played her part well. Uncle Ezra had told her the joke, and she said, ' 'retch,' to Pa, just as the actresses do on the stage, and put her handkerchief to her eyes. Pa said it was 'false,' and Uncle Ezra said, 'O, brother, that I should live to see this day,' and I said, as I looked in the basket, 'Pa, it looks just like you, and I'll leave it to Ma.' That was too much, and Pa got mad in a minute. He always gets mad at me. But he went up and looked in the

basket, and he said it was some Dutch baby, and was evidently from the lower strata of society, and the unnatural mother wanted to get rid of it, and he said he didn't know



O, BROTHER, THAT I SHOULD LIVE TO SEE THIS DAY.

any 'Almira' at all. When he called it a Dutch baby, and called attention to its irregular features, that made Ma mad, and she took it up out of the basket and told Pa it was a perfect picture of him, and tried to put it in Pa's

arms, but he wouldn't have it, and said he would call the police and have it taken to the poor house. Uncle Ezra took Pa in a corner and told him the best thing he could do would be to see 'Almira' and compromise with her, and that made Pa mad, and he was going to hit Uncle Ezra with a chair. Pa was perfectly wild, and if he had a gun I guess he would have shot all of us. Ma took the baby up stairs and had the girl put it to bed, and after Pa got mad enough Uncle Ezra told him it was all a joke, and it was his own baby, that we had put in the basket, and then he was madder than ever, and he told Uncle Ezra never to darken his door again. I don't know how he made up with Ma for calling it a Dutch baby from the Polack settlement, but anyway, he wheels it around every day, and Ma and Pa have got so they speak again."

"That was a mighty mean trick, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Where do you expect to fetch up when you die?" said the grocery man.

"I told Uncle Ezra it was a mean trick," said the boy, "but he said that wasn't a priming to some of the tricks Pa had played on him years ago. He says Pa used to play tricks on everybody. I may be mean, but I never played wicked jokes on blind people as Pa did when he was a boy. Uncle Ezra says once there was a party of four blind vocalists, all girls, gave an entertainment at the town where Pa lived, and they stayed at the hotel where Pa tended bar. Another thing I never sold rum, either, as Pa did. Well, before the blind vocalists went to bed Pa caught a lot of frogs and put them in the beds where the girls were to sleep, and when the poor blind girls got into bed the frogs hopped over them, and the way they got out was a caution. It is bad enough to have frogs hopping all over girls that can see, but for girls that are deprived of their sight, and

don't know what anything is, except by the feeling of it, it looks to me like a pretty tough joke. I guess Pa is sorry now for what he did, 'cause when uncle Ezra told the frog story, I brought home a frog and put it in Pa's bed. Pa has been afraid of paralysis for years, and when his leg, or anything gets asleep, he thinks that is the end of him. Before bedtime I turned the conversation onto paralysis, and told about a man about Pa's age having it on the West Side, and Pa was nervous, and soon after he retired I guess the frog wanted to get acquainted with Pa, 'cause he yelled six kinds of murder, and we went into his room. You know how cold a frog is! Well, you'd dide to see Pa. He laid still, and said his end had come, and Uncle Ezra asked him if it was the end with the head on or the feet, and Pa told him paralysis had marked him for a victim, and he could feel that his left leg was becoming dead. He said he could feel the cold, clammy hand of death walking up him, and he wanted Ma to put a bottle of hot water to his feet. Ma got the bottle of hot water and put it to Pa's feet, and the cork came out and Pa said he was dead, sure enough, now, because he was hot in the extremities, and that a cold wave was going up his leg. Ma asked him where the cold wave was, and he told her, and she thought she would rub it, but she began to yell the same kind of murder Pa did, and she said a snake had gone up her sleeve. Then I thought it was time to stop the circus, and I reached up Ma's lace sleeve and caught the frog by the leg and pulled it out, and told Pa I guessed he had taken my frog to bed with him, and I showed it to him, and then he said I did it, and he would maul me so I could not get up alone, and he said that a boy that would do such a thing would go to hell as sure as preachin', and I asked him if he thought a man who put frogs in the beds with blind

girls, when he was a boy, would get to heaven, and then he told me to lite out, and I lit. I guess Pa will feel better when Uncle Ezra goes away, 'cause he thinks Uncle Ezra talks too much about old times. Well, here comes our baby wagon, and I guess Pa has done penance long enough, and I will go and wheel the kid awhile. Say, you call Pa in, after I take the baby wagon, and tell him you don't know how he would get along without such a nice boy as me, and you can charge it in our next month's bill."

## CHAPTER XX.

## FOURTH OF JULY MISADVENTURES.

"Here, condemn you, you will pay for that cat," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in the store all broke up, the morning after the 4th of July.

"What cat?" said the boy, as he leaned against the zinc ice box to cool his back, which had been having trouble with a bunch of fire crackers in his pistol pocket. "We haven't ordered any cat from here. Who ordered any cat sent to our house? We get our sausage at the market," and the boy rubbed some cold cream on his nose and eyebrows where the skin was off.

"Yes, that is all right enough," said the grocery man, "but somebody who knew where that cat slept, in the box of sawdust, back of the store, filled it full of fire crackers, Wednesday forenoon, when I was out to see the procession, and never notified the cat, and touched them off, and the cat went through the roof of the shed, and she hasn't got hair enough left on her to put in tea. Now, you didn't show up all the forenoon, and I went and asked your Ma where you was, and she said you had been sitting up four nights straight along with a sick boy in the Third Ward, and you was sleeping all the forenoon the 4th of July. If that is so, that lets you out on the cat, but it don't stand to reason. Own up, now, was you asleep all the forenoon, the 4th, while c\*her boys were celebrating, or did you scorch my cat?" and the grocery man looked at the boy as though he would believe every word he said, if he was bad.

"Well," said the bad boy as he yawned as though he had been up all night, "I am innocent of a 'ting up with your eat, but I plead guilty to sitting up with Duffy. You see, I am bed, and it don't make any difference where I am, and Duffy thumped me once when we were playing marbles, and I . . . I would get even with him some time. His Ma washes for us, and when she told me that her boy was sick with fever, and had nobody to stay with him while she was away, I thought it would be a good way to get even with Duffy, when he was weak, and I went down there to his shanty and gave him his medicine, and read to him all day, and he cried 'cause he knew I ought to have mauled him, and that night I sat up with him while his Ma did the ironing, and Duffy was so glad that I went down every day and stayed there every night, and fired medicine down him, and let his Ma sleep, and Duffy has got mashed on me, and he says I will be an angel when I die. Last night makes five nights I have sat up with him, and he has got so he can eat beef tea and crackers. My girl went back on me 'cause she said I was sitting up with some other girl. She said that Duffy story was too thin, but Duffy's Ma was washing at my girl's house and she proved what I said, and I was all right again. I slept all the forenoon the 4th, and then stayed with Duffy till four o'clock, and got a furlough and took my girl to the Soldiers' Home. I had rather set up with Duffy, though."

"O, get out. You can't make me believe you had rather stay in a sick room and set up with a boy, than to take a girl to the 4th of July," said the grocery man, as he took a brush and wiped the sawdust off some bottles of pepper-sauce that he was taking out of a box. "You didn't have any trouble with the girl, did you?"

"No,—not with her," said the boy, as he looked into the little round zinc mirror to see if his eyebrows were begin-

ning to grow. "But her Pa is so unreasonable. I think a man ought to know better than to kick a boy right where he has had a pack a fire crackers explode in his pocket. You see, when I brought the girl back home, she was a wreck. Don't you ever take a girl to the 4th of July. Take the advice of a boy who has experience. We hadn't more than got to the Soldiers' Home ground before some boys who were playing tag grabbed hold of my girl's crushed-strawberry polonaise and ripped it off. That made her mad, and she wanted me to take offense at it, and I tried to reason with the boys and they both jumped on me, and I see the only way to get out of it honorably, was to get out real spry, and I got out. Then we sat down under a tree, to eat lunch, and my girl swallowed a pickle the wrong way, and I pounded her on the back, the way Ma does when I choke, and she yelled, and a policeman grabbed me and shook me, and asked me what I was hurting that poor girl for, and told me if I did it again he would arrest me! Everything went wrong. After dark somebody fired a Roman candle into my girl's hat, and set it on fire, and I grabbed the hat and stamped on it, and spoiled the hair her Ma bought her. By gosh, I thought her hair was curly, but when the wig was off, her hair was as straight as could be. But she was purty, all the same. We got under another tree, to get away from the smell of burned hair, and a boy set off a nigger chaser, and it ran right at my girl's feet, and burned her stockings, and a woman put the fire out for her, while I looked for the boy that fired the nigger chaser, but I didn't want to find him. She was pretty near a wreck by that time, though she had all her dress left except the polonaise, and we went and sat under a tree in a quiet place, and I put my arm around her and told her never to mind the accidents, 'cause it would be dark when we got home, and just

then a spark dropped down through the trees and fell in my pistol pocket, right next to her, where my bunch of fire crackers was, and they began to go off. Well, I never saw such a sight as she was. Her dress was one of these mosquito bar, cheese cloth dresses, and it burned just like punk. I had presence of mind enough to roll her on the grass and put out the fire, but in doing that I neglected my own conflagration, and when I got her put out, my coat tail and trousers were a total loss. My, but she looked like a goose that had been picked, and I looked like a fireman that fell through a hatchway. My girl wanted to go home, and I took her home, and her Pa was setting on the front steps, and he wouldn't accept her, looking that way. He said he placed in my possession a whole girl, clothed in her right mind, and I had brought back a burnt offering. He teaches in our Sunday school, and knows how to talk pious, but his boots are offul thick. I tried to explain that I was not responsible for the fireworks, and that he could bring in a bill against the government and I showed him how I was bereaved of a coat tail and some pants, but he wouldn't reason at all, and when his foot hit me I thought it was the resurrection, sure, and when I got over the fence, and had picked myself up, I never stopped till I got to Duffy's and I set up with him, cause I thought her pa was after me, and I thought he wouldn't enter a sick room and maul a watcher at the bedside of an invalid. But that settles it with me about celebrating. I don't care if we did whip 'he British, after declaring independence, I don't want my pants burnt off. What is the declaration of independence good for to a girl who loses her polonaise, and has her hair burnt off, and a nigger chaser burning her stockings? No, sir, they may talk about the glorious 4th of July, but will it bring back that blonde wig, or retail my coat? Hereafter I am a rebel, and I will go out

in the woods the way Pa does, and come home with a black eye, got in a rational way."

"What, did your Pa get a black eye, too? I hadn't heard about that," said the grocery man, giving the boy a handful of unbaked peanuts to draw him out. "Didn't get to fighting, did he?"

"No, Pa don't fight. It is wrong, he says, to fight, unless you are sure you can whip the fellow, and Pa always gets whipped, so he quit fighting. You see, one of the deacons in our church lives out on a farm, and his folks were going away to spend the 4th, and he had to do all the chores, so he invited Pa and Ma to come out to the farm and have a nice quiet time, and they went. There is nothing Pa likes better than to go out on a farm, and pretend he knows everything. When the farmer got Pa and Ma out there he set them to work, and Ma shelled peas while Pa went to dig potatoes for dinner. I think it was mean for the deacon to send Pa out in the corn field to dig potatoes, and set the dog on Pa, and tree him in a apple tree near the bee hives, and then go and visit with Ma and leave Pa in the tree with the dog barking at him. Pa said he never knew how mean a deacon could be, until he had set on a limb of that apple tree all the afternoon. About time to do chores the farmer came and found Pa, and called the dog off, and Pa came down, and then the farmer played the meanest trick of all. He said city people didn't know how to milk cows, and Pa said he wished he had as many dollars as he knew how to milk cows. He said his spechulty was milking kicking cows, and the farmer gave Pa a tin pail and a milking stool and let down the bars, and pointed out to Pa 'the worst cow on the place.' Pa knew his reputation was at stake, and he went up to the cow and punched it in the flank and said, 'hist, confound you.' Well, the cow wasn't a histing cow, but a histing bull, and Pa

knew it was a bull as quick as he see it put down its head and beller, and Pa dropped the pail and stool, and started for the barn, and the bull after Pa. I don't think it was



PA WENT TO DIG POTATOES FOR DINNER.

right in Ma to bet two shillings with the farmer that Pa would get to the barn before the bull did, though she won the bet. Pa said he knew it was a bull just as soon as the

horns got tangled up in his coat tail, and when he struck on the other side of the barn, and his nose hit the ash barrel where they make lye for soap, Pa said he saw more fireworks than we did at the Soldiers' Home. Pa wouldn't celebrate any more, and he came home after thanking the farmer for his courtesies, but he wants me to borrow a gun and go out with him hunting. We are going to shoot a bull and a dog and some bees, maybe we will shoot the farmer, if Pa keeps on as mad as he is now. Well, we won't have another 4th of July for a year, and may be by that time my girl's polonaise and hair will grow out, and that bull may become gentle so Pa can milk it. Ta-ta."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## WORKING ON SUNDAY.

"Hello," said the grocery man to the bad boy as he came in looking sick at heart, and all broke up. "How is your muscle this morning?"

"All right enough," said the boy with a look of inquiry, as though wondering what was coming next. "Why?"

"O, nothing, only I was going to grind the hatchet, and some knives and things, this morning, and I thought maybe you would like to go out in the shed and turn the grindstone for me to develop your muscles. Turning the grindstone is the healthiest thing a boy can do."

"That is all right enough," said the bad boy, as he took up a sweet cracker, "but please take a good look at me. Do I look like a grindstone boy? Do I resemble a good little boy that can't say 'no,' and goes off and turns a grindstone half a day for some old duffer, who pays him by giving him a handful of green currants, or telling him he will be a man some day, and the boy goes off one way, with a lame back, while the good man goes the other way with a sharp scythe, and a chuckle at the softness of the boy? You are mistaken in me. I have passed the grindstone period, and you will have to pick up another sardine who has never done circular work. Not any grindstone for Henavery, if you please."

"You are getting too smart," said the grocery man as he charged a pound of sweet crackers to the boy's father.

"You don't have to turn the grindstone if you don't want to."

"That's what I thought," says the boy as he takes a handful of blueberries. "You grindstone sharps, who are always laying for a fool boy to give taffy to, and get him to break his back, don't play it fine enough. You bear too hard on the grindstone. I have seen the time when a man could get me to turn the grindstone for him till the cows come home, by making me believe it was fun, and by telling me he never saw a boy that seemed to throw so much soul into turning a grindstone as I did, but I have found that such men are hypocrites. They inveigle a boy into their nest, like the spider does the fly, and at first they don't bear on hard, but just let the blade of the axe or the scythe touch the grindstone, and they make a boy believe he is a bigger man than old Grant. They bet him he will get tired, and he bets that he can turn a grindstone as long as anybody, and when the boy has got his reputation at stake, then they begin to bear on hard, and the boy gets tired but he holds out, and when the tools are ground he says he is as fresh as a daisy, when he is tired enough to die. Such men do more to teach boys the hollowness of the world, and its tricky features, than anything, and they teach boys to know who are friends and who are foes. No, sir, the best way is to hire a grown person to turn your grindstone. I remember I turned a grindstone four hours for a farmer once, and when I got through he said I could go to the spring and drink all the water I wanted for nothing. He was the tightest man I ever saw. Why, tight! That man was tight enough to hold kerosene."

"That's all right. Who wanted you to turn the grindstone, anyway? But what is it about y'ur Pa and Ma being turned out of church? I hear they scandalized themselves horribly last Sunday."

"Well, you see, me and my chum put up a job on Pa to make him think Sunday was only Saturday and Ma she fell into it, and I guess we are all going to get fired from the church for working on Sunday. You see they didn't go to meetin' last Sunday because Ma's new bonnet hadn't



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE FOLKS BEGAN GOING TO CHURCH.

come, and Monday and Tuesday it rained, and the rest of the week was so muddy no one called, or they could not get anywhere, so Monday I slid out early and got the daily paper, and on Tuesday my chum he got the paper off the

steps and put Monday's paper in its place. I watched when they were reading it, but they did not notice the date. Then Wednesday we put Tuesday's paper on the steps, and Pa said it seemed more than Tuesday, but Ma she got the paper of the day before and looked at the date and said it seemed so to her, but she guessed they had lost a day somehow. Thursday we got Wednesday's paper on the steps, and Friday we rung in Thursday's paper, and Saturday my chum he got Friday's paper on the steps, and Ma said she guessed she would wash to-morrow, and Pa said he believed he would hoe in the garden and get the weeds out so it would look better to folks when they went by Sunday to church. Well, Sunday morning came, and with it Saturday's daily paper, and Pa barely glanced over it as he got on his overalls and went out in his shirt sleeves a-hoeing in the front garden, and I and my chum helped Ma carry water to wash. She said it seemed the longest week she ever saw, but when we brought the water, and took a plate of pickles to the hired girl that was down with the mumps, we got in the lilac bushes and waited for the curtain to rise. It wasn't long before folks began going to church and you'd a dide laughing to see them all stop in front of where Ma was washing and look at her, and then go on to where Pa was hoeing weeds and stop and look at him and then drive on. After about a dozen teams had passed I heard Ma ask Pa if he knew who was dead, as there must be a funeral somewhere. Pa had just hoed into a bumble-bee's nest and said he did not know of any that was dead, but knew some that ought to be, and Ma she did not ask any foolish questions any more. After about twenty teams had stopped, Ma she got nervous and asked Deacon Smith if he saw anything green; he said something about desecration, and drove away. Deacon Brown asked Pa if he did not think he was setting a bad

example before his boy; but Pa, he said he thought it would be a good one if the boy could only be hired to do it. Finally Ma got mad and took the tub behind the house where they could not see her. About four o'clock that afternoon we saw a dozen of our congregation headed by the minister, file into our yard, and my chum and I knew it was time to fly, so we got on the back steps where we could hear. Pa met them at the door, expecting some bad news; and when they were seated, Ma she came in and remarked that it was a very unhealthy year, and it stood people in hand to meet their latter end. None of them said a word until the elder put on his specs, and said it was a solemn occasion, and Ma she turned pale, and wondered who it could be, and Pa says, 'Don't keep us in suspense, who is dead?' and the elder said no one was dead; but they called as a duty they owed the cause to take action on them for working on Sunday. Ma, she fainted away, and they threw a pitcher of water down her back, and Pa said he guessed they were a pack of lunatics, but they all swore it was Sunday, and they saw Ma washing and Pa out hoeing, as they went to church, and they had called to take action on them. Then there was a few minutes low conversation I could not catch, and then we heard Pa kick his chair over and say it was more tricks of that darned boy. Then we knew it was time to adjourn, and I was just getting through the back fence as Pa reached me with a barrel stave, and that's what makes me limp some!"

"That was real mean in you boys," said the grocery man. "It will be hard for your Pa and Ma to explain that matter. Just think how bad they must feel."

"O, I don't know. I remember hearing Pa and Uncle Ezra tell how they fooled their father once, and got him to go to mill with a grist, on Sunday, and Pa said he would defy anybody to fool him on the day of the week. I don't

think a man ought to tempt his little boy by defying him to fool his father. "Well, I'll take a glass of your fifty cent cider and go," and soon the grocery man looked out of the window and found somebody had added a cipher to the "Sweet cider, only five cents a glass," make it an expensive drink, considering it was made of sour apples.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE OLD MAN AWFULLY BLOATED.

"Come in," said the grocery man to the bad boy, as the youth stood on the steps in an uncertain sort of a way, as though he did not know whether he would be welcome or not. "I tell you, boy, I pity you. I understand your Pa has got to drinking again. It is too bad. I can't think of anything that humiliates a boy, and makes him so ashamed as to have a father that is in the habit of hoisting in too much benzine. A boy feels as though everybody was down on him, and I don't wonder that such boys often turn out bad. What started your Pa to drinking again?"

"O, Ma thinks it was losing money on the Chicago races. You see, Pa is great on pointers. He don't usually bet unless he has got a sure thing, but when he gets what they call a pointer, that is, somebody tells him a certain horse is sure to win, because the other horses are to be pulled back, he thinks a job has been put up, and if he thinks he is on the inside of the ring he will bet. He says it does not do any hurt to bet, if you win, and he argues that a man who wins lots of money can do a great deal of good with it. But he had to walk home from the Chicago races all the same, and he has been steaming ever since. Pa can't stand adversity. But I guess we have got him all right now. He is the scariest man you ever saw," and the boy took a can opener and began to cut the zinc under the stove, just to see if it would work as well on zinc as on tin.

"What, you haven't been dissecting him again, have

"you?" said the grocery man, as he pulled a stool up beside the boy to hear the news. "How did you bring him to his [redacted]?"

"Well, Ma tried having the minister talk to Pa, but Pa talked Bible, about taking a little wine for the stomach's sake, and gave illustrations about Noah getting full, so the minister couldn't brace him up, and then Ma had some of the sisters come and talk to him, but he broke them all up by talking about what an appetite they had for champagne punch when they were out in camp last summer, and they couldn't have any effect on him, and so Ma said she guessed I would have to exercise my ingenuity on Pa again. Ma has an idea that I have got some sense yet, so I told her that if she would do just as I said, me and my chum would scare Pa so he would swear off. She said she would, and we went to work. First, I took Pa's spectacles down to an optician Saturday night, and had the glasses taken out and a pair put in their place that would magnify, and I took them home and put them in Pa's spectacle case. Then I got a suit of clothes from my chum's trunk, about half the size of Pa's clothes. My chum's uncle is a very small man, and Pa is corpulent. I got a plug hat three sizes smaller than Pa's hat, and the name out of Pa's hat and put it in the small hat. I got a shirt about half big enough for Pa, and put his initials on the thing under the bosom, and got a number fourteen collar. Pa wears seventeen. Pa promised to brace up and go to church Sunday morning, and Ma put these small clothes where Pa could put them on. I told Ma, when Pa woke up, to tell him he looked awfully bloated, and excite his curiosity, and then send for me."

"You didn't play such a trick as that on a poor old man, did you?" said the grocery man, as a smile came over his [redacted].

"You bet. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. Well, Ma told Pa he looked awfully bloated, and that his dissipation was killing him, as well as all the rest of the family. Pa said he guessed he wasn't bloated very much, but he got up and put on his spectacles and looked at himself in the glass. You'd a dide to see him look at himself. His face looked as big as two faces, through the glass, and his nose was a sight. Pa looked scared, and then



THE HAND LOOKED LIKE A HAM.

he held up his hand and looked at that. His hand looked like a ham. Just then I came in, and I turned pale, with some chalk on my face, and I begun to cry, and I said, 'O, Pa, what ails you? You are so swelled up I hardly know you.' Pa looked sick to his stomach, and then he tried to get on his pants. O, my, it was all I could do to keep from laughing to see him pull them pants on. He could just get his legs in, and when I got a shoe horn and gave it to him,

he was mad. He said it was a mean boy that would give his Pa a shoe horn to put on his pants with. The pants wouldn't come around Pa into ten inches, and Pa said he must have eat something that disagreed with him, and he laid it to watermelon. Ma stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth to keep from laughing, when she see Pa look at himself. The legs of the pants were so tight Pa could hardly breathe, and he turned pale, and said: 'Hennery, your Pa is a mighty sick man,' and then Ma and me both laughed, and he said we wanted him to die so we could spend his life insurance in riotous living. But when Pa put on the condensed shirt, Ma she laid down on the lounge and fairly yelled, and I laughed till my side ached. Pa got it over his head, and got his hands in the sleeves, and couldn't get it either way, and he couldn't see us laugh, but he could hear us, and he said: 'It's darned funny, ain't it, to have a parent swelled up this way. If I bust you will both be sorry.' Well, Ma took hold of one side of the shirt, and I took hold of the other, and we pulled it on, and when Pa's head came up through the collar, his face was blue. Ma told him she was afraid he would have a stroke of apoplexy before he got his clothes on, and I ~~saw~~ Pa thought so too. He tried to get the collar on, but it wouldn't go half way around his neck, and he looked in the glass and cried, he looked so. He sat down in a chair and panted he was so out of breath, and the shirt and pants ripped, and Pa said there was no use living if he was going to be a rival to a fat woman in the side show. Just then I put the plug hat on his head, and it was so small it was going to roll off, when Pa tried to fit it on his head, and then he took it off and looked inside of it to see if it was his hat, and when he found his name in it, he said, 'Take it away. My head is all wrong, too.' Then he told me to go for the doctor, mighty quick. I got the doctor

and told him what we were trying to do with Pa, and he said he would finish the job. So the Doc. came in, and Pa was on the lounge, and when the Doc. saw him, he said it was lucky he was called just as he was or we would have required an undertaker. He put some pounded ice on Pa's head the first thing, ordered the shirt cut open, and we got the pants off. Then he gave Pa an emetic, and had his feet soaked, and Pa said, 'Doc, if you will bring me out of this I will never drink another drop.' The Doc. told Pa that his life was not worth a button if he ever drank again, and left about half a pint of sugar pills to be fired into Pa every five minutes. Ma and me sat up with Pa all day Sunday, and Monday morning I changed the spectacles, and took the clothes home, and along about noon Pa said he felt as though he could get up. Well, you never see a tickleder man than he was when he found the swelling had gone down so he could get his pants and shirt on, and he says that doctor is the best in this town. Ma says I am a smart boy, and Pa has taken the pledge, and we are all right. Say, you don't think there is anything wrong in a boy playing it on his Pa once in a while, do you?"

"Not much. You have very likely saved you Pa's life. No, sir, joking is all right when by so doing you can break a person of a bad habit," and the grocery man cut a chew off a piece of plug that was on the counter, which the boy had soaked in kerosene, and before he had fairly got it rolled in his cheek, he spit it out and began to gag, and as the boy started leisurely out the door, the grocery man said, "Look-a-here, condemn you, don't you ever tamper with my tobacco again, or, by thunder, I'll manl you," and he followed the boy to the door, spitting cotton all the way; and, as the boy went around the corner, the grocery man thought how different a joke seemed when it was on

somebody else. And then he turned to go in and rinse the kerosene out of his mouth, and found a sign on a box of new green apples, as follows:

**COLIC OR CHOLERA INFANTUM  
YOU PAYS YOUR MONEY  
AND TAKES YOUR CHOICE.**

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## A GRAND REHEARSAL.

"I am thy father's ghost," said a sheeted form in the doorway of the grocery, one evening, and the grocery man got behind the cheese box, while the ghost continued in a sepulchral voice, "doomed for a certain time to walk the night," and, waving a chair round, the ghost strode up to the grocery man, and with the other ghostly hand reached into a box of figs.

"No, you ain't no ghost," said the grocery man, recognizing the bad boy. "Ghosts do not go prowling around groceries stealing wormy figs. What do you mean by this sinful masquerade business? My father never had no ghost!"

"O, we have struck it now," said the bad boy, as he pulled off his mask and rolled up the sheet he had worn around him. "We are going to have amateur theatricals, to raise money to have the church carpeted, and I am going to boss the job."

"You don't say," answered the grocery man, as he thought how much he could sell to the church people for a strawberry and ice cream festival, and how little he could sell for amateur theatricals. "Who is going into it, and what are you going to play?"

"Pa and Ma, and me, and the minister, and three choir singers, and my chum, and the minister's wife, and two deacons, and an old maid are rehearsing, but we have not decided what to play yet. They all want to play a differ-

ent play, and I am fixing it so they can all be satisfied. The minister wants to play Hamlet, Pa wants to play Rip Van Winkle, Ma wants to play Mary Anderson, the old maid wants to play a boarding-school play, and the choir singers want an opera, and the minister's wife wants to play Lady Macbeth, and my chum and me want to play a double song-and-dance, and I am going to give them all a show. We had a rehearsal last night, and I am the only one able to be around to-day. You see, they have all been studying different plays, and they all wanted to talk at once. We let the minister sail in first. He had on a pair of his wife's black stockings, and a mantle made of a linen buggy-lap blanket, and he wore a mason's cheese knife such as these fellows with poke bonnets and white feathers wear when they get an invitation to a funeral or an excursion. Well, you never saw Hamlet murdered the way he did it. His interpretation of the character was that Hamlet was a dude that talked through his nose, and while he was repeating Hamlet's soliloquy, Pa, who had come in with an old hunting suit on, as Rip Van Winkle, went to sleep, and he didn't wake up till Lady Macbeth came in, in the sleep-walking scene. She couldn't find a knife, so I took a slice of watermelon and sharpened it for her, and she made a mistake in the one she was to stab, and she stabbed Hamlet in the neck with a slice of watermelon, and the core of the melon fell on Pa's face, as he lay asleep as Rip, and when Lady Macbeth said, 'Out damned spot,' Pa woke up and felt the gob of watermelon on his face, and he thought he had been murdered, and Ma came in on a hop, skip and jump as 'Parthenia,' and threw her arms around a deacon who was going to play the grave-digger, and began to call him pet names, and Pa was mad, and the choir singers they began to sing, 'In the North Sea lived a whale,' and then they quit acting. You'd a dide to see

Hamlet. The piece of watermelon went down his neck, and Lady Macbeth went off and left it in the wound under his collar, and Ma had to pull it out, and Hamlet said the seeds and the juice was running down inside his shirt, and he said he wouldn't play if he was going to be stabbed with a slice of melon, so while his wife was getting the melon seeds out of his neck, and drying the juice on his shirt, I sharpened a cucumber for Lady Macbeth to use as a dagger, but Hamlet kicked on cucumbers, too, and I had more trouble than any stage manager ever had. Then Pa wanted to rehearse the drunken scene in Rip Van Winkle, where he hugs Gretchen and drinks out of a flask behind her back, and he got one of the choir singers to act as Gretchen, and I guess he would have been hugging till this time, and have swallowed the flask, if Ma had not taken him by the ear and said, a little of that would go a good ways in an entertainment for the church. Pa said he didn't know as it was any worse than her prancing up to a grave-digger and hugging him till the filling came out of his teeth, and then the minister decided that we wouldn't have any hugging at all in the play, and the choir girls said they wouldn't play, and the old maids struck, and the play came to a stand-still."

"Well, that beats anything I ever heard tell of. It's a shame for people outside the profession to do play acting, and I won't go to the entertainment unless I get a pass," said the grocery man. "Did you rehearse any more?"

"Yes the minister wanted to try the ghost scene," said the boy, "and he wanted me to be the ghost. Well, they have two 'Markies' and two 'Toppies' in Uncle Tom's Cabin, and I thought two ghosts in Hamlet would about fill the bill for amateurs, so I got my chum to act as one ghost. We broke them all up. I wanted to have something new in ghosts, so my chum and me got two pair of Ma's

long stockings, one pair red and one pair blue, and I put on a red one and a blue one, and my chum did the same. Then we got some ruffled clothes belonging to Ma, with flounces and things on, and put them on so they came most down to our knees, and we put sheets over us, clear to our feet, and when Hamlet got to yearning for his father's ghost, I came in out of the bathroom with the sheet over me, and said I was the huckleberry he was looking for, and my chum followed me out and said he was a twin ghost, also, and then Hamlet got on his ear and said he wouldn't play with two ghosts, and he went off pouting, and then my chum and me pulled off the sheets and danced a clog dance. Well, when the rest of the troop saw our make-up, it nearly killed them. Most of them had seen ballet dancers, but they never saw them with different colored socks. The minister said the benefit was rapidly becoming a farce, and before we had danced half a minute Ma recognized her socks, and she came for me with a hot box, and made me take them off, and Pa was mad and said the dancing was the only thing that was worth the price of admission, and he scolded Ma, and the choir girls sided with Pa, and just then my chum caught his toe in the carpet and fell down, and that loosened the plaster overhead and about a bushel fell on the crowd. Pa thought lightning had struck the house, the minister thought it was a judgment on them all for play acting, and he began to shed his Hamlet costume with one hand and pick the plaster out of his hair with the other. The women screamed and tried to get the plaster out of their necks, and while Pa was brushing off the choir singers Ma said the rehearsal was adjourned and they all went home, but we are going to rehearse again on Friday night. The play cannot be considered a success, but we will bring it out all right by the time the entertainment is to come off."

"By gum," said the grocery man, "I would like to have seen that minister as Hamlet. Didn't he look funny?"

"Funny! Well, I should remark. He seemed to predominate. That is, he was too fresh, too numerous, as it were. But at the next rehearsal I am going to work in an act from Richard the Third, and my chum is going to play the Chinaman of the Danites, and I guess we will take the cake. Say, I want to work in an idiot somewhere. How would you like to play the idiot? You wouldn't have to rehearse or anything—"

At this point the bad boy was seen to go out of the grocery store real spry, followed by a box of wooden clothespins, that the grocery man had thrown after him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE CRUEL WOMAN AND THE LUCKLESS DOG.

"Hello!" said the grocery man to the bad boy, as he came in with a black eye, leading a hungry looking dog that was walking on three legs, and had one leg tied up with a red silk handkerchief. "What is this—a part of your amateur theatre? Now, you get out of here with that dog mighty quick. A boy that hurts dogs so they have to have their legs tied up, is no friend of mine," and the grocery man took up a broom to drive the dog out doors.

"There, you calm yourself," says the boy to the grocery man, as the dog got behind the boy and looked up at the grocery man as though he was not afraid as long as the bad boy was around. "Set up the crackers and cheese, sausage and pickles, and everything this dog wants to eat—he is a friend of mine—that dog is my guest, and those are my splints on his broken leg, and that is my handkerchief that my girl gave me, wound around it, and you touch that dog except in the way of kindness, and down comes your house." And the boy doubled up his fists as though he meant business.

"Poor doggie," said the grocery man, as he cut off a piece of sausage and offered it to the dog, which was declined with thanks, expressed by the wagging tail. "Where did you steal him?"

"I didn't steal him, and he is no cannibal. He won't eat your sausage!" and the boy put up his elbow as though to ward off an imaginary blow. "You see, this dog was

following a pet dog that belonged to a woman, and she tried to shoo him away, but he wouldn't shoo. This dog did not know that he was a low born, miserable dog, and had no right to move in the society of an aristocratic pet dog, and he followed right along. He thought this was a free country, and one dog was as good as another, and he followed that woman and her pet dog right into her door yard. The pet dog encouraged this dog, and he went in the yard, and when the woman got up on the steps she threw a velocipede at this dog and broke his leg, and then she took up her pet and went in the house so she wouldn't hear this dog howl. She is a nice woman, and I see her go to meeting every Sunday with a lot of morocco books in her hands, and once I pumped the organ in the church where she goes, and she was so pious I thought she was an angel—but angels don't break dogs legs. I'll bet when she goes up to the gate and sees St. Peter open the book and look for the charges against her she will tremble as though she had fits. And when St. Peter runs his finger down the ledger, and stops at the dog column, and turns and looks at her over his spectacles, and says, 'Madam, how about your stabbing a poor dog with a velocipede, and breaking its leg?' she will claim it was an accident; but she can't fool Pete. He is on to everybody's racket, and if they get in there, they have got to have a clean record."

"Say, look-a-here," said the grocery man, as he looked at the boy in astonishment as he unwound the handkerchief to dress the dog's broken leg, while the dog looked up in the boy's face with an expression of thankfulness and confidence that he was an able practitioner in dog bone setting, "what kind of talk is that? You talk of heaven as though the books were kept like the *books* of a grocery, and you speak too familiarly of St. Peter."

"Well, I didn't mean any disrespect," said the boy, as

he fixed the splints on the dog's leg, and tied it with a string, while the dog licked his hand, "but I learned in Sunday school that up there they watch even the sparrow's fall, and they wouldn't be apt to get left on a dog bigger than a whole flock of sparrows, 'specially when the dog's fall was accompanied with such a noise as a velocipede makes when it falls down stairs. No sir, a woman who throws a velocipede at a poor, homeless dog, and breaks its leg, may carry a carload of prayer books, and she may attend to all the sociables, but according to what I have been told, if she goes sailing up to the gate of New Jerusalem, as though she owned the whole place and expects to be ushered into a private box, she will get left. The man in the box office will tell her she is not on the list, and that there is a variety show below, where the devil is a star, and fallen angels are dancing the can-can with sheet-iron tights, on brimstone lakes, and she can probably crawl under the canvas, but she can't get in among the angelic hosts until she can satisfactorily explain that dog story that is told of her. Possibly I have got a raw way of expressing myself, but I had rather take my chances if I should apply for admission up there, with this lame dog under my arm than to take hers with a pug dog that hasn't got any legs broke. A lame dog and a clear conscience beats a pet dog, when your conscience feels nervous. Now I am going to lay this dog in a barrel of dried apples, where your cat sleeps, and give him a little rest, and I will give you four minutes to tell me all you know, and you will have three minutes on your hands with nothing to say. Unbutton your lip and give your teeth a vacation."

"Well, you *have* got gall. However, I don't know but you are right about that woman that hurt the dog. Still, it may have been her way of petting a strange dog. We should try to look upon the charitable side of people's

eccentricities. But say, I want to ask you if you have seen anything of my man that delivers groceries. Saturday night I sent him over to your house to deliver some things, about ten o'clock, and he has ~~7~~ 7t showed up since. What do you think has become of him?"

"Well, by gum, that accounts for it. Saturday night, about ten o'clock, we heard somebody in the back yard, around the kitchen door, just as we were going to bed, and Pa was afraid it was a burglar after the church money he had collected last Sunday. He had got to turn it over the next day, to pay the minister's expenses on his vacation, and it made him nervous to have it around. I peeked out of the window and saw the man, and I told Pa, and Pa got a revolver and began shooting through the wire screen to the kitchen window, and I saw the man drop the basket and begin to climb over the fence real sudden, and I went out and began to groan, as though somebody was dying in the alley, and I brought in the basket with the mackerel and green corn, and told Pa that from the groaning out there I guess he had killed the grocery delivery man, and I wanted Pa to go out and help me hunt for the body, but he said he was gong to take the midnight train and go out west on some business, and Pa lit out. I guess your man was scared and went one way, and Pa was scared and went the other. Won't they be astonished when they meet each other on the other side of the world? Pa will shoot him again when they meet, if he gives Pa any sass. Pa says when he gets mad he had just as soon eat as to kill a man."

"Well, I guess my man has gone off to a Sunday picnic or something, and will come back when he gets sober, but how are your theatricals getting along?" asked the grocery man.

"O, that scheme is all busted," said the boy. "At least until the minister gets back from his vacation. The com-

gregation has noticed a red spot on his hand for some time, and the ladies said what he needed was rest. They said if that spot was allowed to go on it might develop into a pimple, and the minister might die of blood poison, superinduced by overwork, and they took up a collection, and he has gone. The night they bid him good-bye, the spot on his hand was the subject of much comment. The women sighed and said it was lucky they noticed the spot on his hand before it had sapped his young life away. Pa said Job had more than four hundred boils worse than that, and he never took a vacation, and then Ma dried Pa up. She told Pa he had never suffered from blood poison and Pa said he could raise cat boils for the market and never squeal. Ma see the only way to shut Pa up was to let him go home with the choir singer. So she bounced him off with her, and he didn't get home till 'most eleven o'clock, but Ma she set up for him. Maybe what she said to Pa made him go West after peppering your burglar. Well, I must go home now, 'cause I run the family since Pa lit out. Say, send some of your most expensive canned fruits and things over to the house. Darn the expense." And the bad boy took the lame dog under his arm and walked out.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE BAD BOY GROWS THOUGHTFUL.

"What you sitting there like a bump on a log for?" asked the grocery man of the bad boy, as the youth had sat on a box for half an hour, with his hands in his pockets, looking at a hole in the floor, until his eyes were set like a dying horse. "What you thinking of, anyway? It seems to me boys set around and think more than they used to when I was a boy," and the grocery man brushed the wilted lettuce, and shook it, and tried to make it stand up stiff and crisp, before he put it outdoors; but the contrary lettuce which had been picked the day before, looked so tired that the boy noticed it.

"That lettuce reminds me of a girl. Yesterday I was in here when it was new, like the girl going to the picnic, and it was as fresh and proud, and starched up, and kitteny, and full of life, and sassy as a girl starting out for a picnic. To-day it has got back from the picnic, and, like the girl, the starch is all taken out, and it is limber, and languid, and tired, and can't stand up alone, and it looks as though it wanted to be laid at rest beside the rotten apples in the alley, rather than be set out in front of a store to be sold to honest people, and give them gangrene of the liver," and the boy put on a health commissioner air that frightened the grocery man, and he threw the lettuce out the back door.

"You never mind about my lettuce," said the grocery

man, "I can attend to my affairs. But now tell me what you were thinking about here all the morning?"

"I was thinking what a fool King Solomon was," said the boy, with the air of one who has made a statement that has got to be argued pretty strong to make it hold water.

"Now, look-a-here," said the grocery man, in anger, "I have stood it to have you play tricks on me, and have listened to your condemned foolishness without a murmur as long as you have confined yourself to people now living, but when you attack Solomon—the wisest man, the great king—and call him a fool, friendship ceases, and you must get out of this store. Solomon, in all his glory, is a friend of mine, and no fool boy is going to abuse him in my presence. Now, you dry up!"

"Sit down on the ice-box," said the boy to the grocery man; "what you need is rest. You are overworked. Your alleged brain is equal to wilted lettuce, and it can devise ways and means to hide rotten peaches under good ones, so as to sell them to blind orphans; but when it comes to grasping great questions, your small brain cannot comprehend them. Your brain may go up sideways to a great question and rub against it, but it cannot surround it, and grasp it. That's where you are deformed. Now, it is different with me. I can raise brain to sell to you grocery men. Listen. This Solomon is credited with being the wisest man, and yet history says he had a thousand wives. Just think of it. You have got one wife, and Pa has got one, and all the neighbors have one, if they have had any kind of luck. Does not one wife make you pay attention? Wouldn't two wives break you up? Wouldn't three cause you to see stars? How would ten strike you? Why, man alive, you do not grasp the magnitude of the statement that Solomon had a thousand wives! A thousand wives,

standing side by side, would reach about four blocks. Marching by fours, it would take them twenty minutes to pass a given point. The largest summer resort hotel only holds about five hundred people, so Sol would have had to hire two hotels if he took his wives out for a day in the country. If you would stop and think once in a while you would know more."

The grocery man's eyes had begun to stick out as the bad boy continued, as though the statistics had never been brought to his attention before, but he was bound to stand by his old friend, Solomon, and he said, "Well, Solomon's wives must have been different from our wives of the present day."

"Not much," said the boy, as he saw he was paralyzing the grocery man. "Women have been about the same ever since Eve. She got mashed on the old original dude, and it stands to reason that Solomon's wives were no better than the mother of the human race. Statistics show that one woman out of every ten is red-headed. That would give Solomon an even hundred red-headed wives. Just that hundred red-headed wives would be enough to make an ordinary man think that there is a land that is fairer than this. Then there would be, out of the other nine hundred, about three hundred blondes, and the other six hundred would be brunettes, and maybe a few albinos and bearded women, and fat women, and dwarfs. Now, those thousand women had appetites, desires for dress and style, the same as all women. Imagine Solomon saying to them: 'Girls, lets all go down to the ice cream saloon and have a dish of ice cream.' Can you, with your brain muddled with codfish and new potatoea, realize the scene that would follow? Suppose after Solomon's broom brigade had got seated in the ice creamery, one of the red-headed wives

should catch Solomon winking at a strange girl at another table. You may think Solomon did not know enough to wink, or that he was not that kind of a flirt, but he *must* have been or he could never have succeeded in marrying a thousand wives in a sparsely settled country. No, sir, it looks to me as though Solomon, in all his glory, was an old masher, and from what I have seen of men being bossed around with one wife, I don't envy Solomon his thousand.



THIS BABY IS TISHING.

Why, just imagine that gang of wives going and ordering fall bonnets. Solomon would have to be a king or a Vanderbilt to stand it. Ma wears five dollar silk stockings, and Pa kicks awfully when the bill comes in. Imagine Solomon putting up for a few thousand pair of silk stockings! I am glad you will sit down and reason with me in a rational way about some of these Bible stories that take my breath away. The minister stands me off when I try to talk with

him about such things, and tells me to study the parable of the Prodigal Son, and the deacons tell me to go and soak my head. There is darn little encouragement for a boy to try and figure out things. How would you like to have a thousand red-headed wives come into the store this minute and tell you they wanted you to send carriages around to the house at three o'clock so they could go for a drive? Or how would you like to have a hired girl come rushing in and tell you to send up six hundred doctors because six hundred of your wives had been taken with cholera morbus? Or—"

"O, don't mention it," said the grocery man, with a shudder. "I wouldn't take Solomon's place, and be the natural protector of a thousand wives if anybody would give me the earth. Think of getting up in a cold winter morning and building a thousand fires! Think of two thousand pair of hands in a fellow's hair! Boy, you have shown me that Solomon needed a guardian over him. He didn't have sense."

"Yes," says the boy, "and think of two thousand feet, each one as cold as a brick of chocolate ice cream. A man would want a back as big as the fence of a fair ground. But I don't want to harrow up your feelings. I must go and put some arnica on Pa. He has got home, and says he has been to a summer resort on a vacation, and he is all covered with blotches. He says it is mosquito bites, but Ma thinks he has been shot full of bird shot by some water-melon farmer. Ma hasn't got any sympathy for Pa because he didn't take her along, but if she had been there she would have been filled with bird shot, too. But you mustn't detain me. Between Pa and the baby, I have got all I can attend to. The baby is teething, and Ma makes me put my fingers in the baby's mouth to help it

cut teeth. That is a humiliating position for a boy as big as I am. Say, how many babies do you figure that Solomon had to buy rubber toothing rings for, in all his glory?"

And the boy went out, leaving the grocery man reflecting on what a family Solomon must have had, and how he needed to be the wisest man to get along without a circus afternoon and evening.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

FARM REPROBLEMS.

"Want to buy any cabbages?" said the bad boy to the grocery man, as he stopped at the door of the grocery, dressed in a blue wamus, his breeches tucked in his boots, and an old hat on his head, with a hole that let out his hair through the top. He had got out of a democrat wagon, and was holding the lines hitched to a horse about forty years old, that leaned against the hitching post to rest, "Only a shilling apiece."

"O, go 'way," said the grocery man. "I only pay three cents apiece." And then he looked at the boy and said "Hello, Hennery, is that you? I have missed you all the week, and now you come on to me sudden, disguised as a granger. What does this all mean?"

"It means that I have been the victim of as vile a conspiracy as ever was known since Caesar was stabbed, and Marc Antony orated over his prostrate corpse in the Roman forum, to an audience of supes and scene shifters," and the boy, dropping the lines on the sidewalk, said "Whoa, gol darn you!" to the horse that was asleep, wiped his boots on the grass in front of the store and came in, and seated himself on the old half bushel. "There, this seems like home again."

"What's the row?—who has been playing it on you?" And the grocery man smelled a sharp trade in cabbages, as well as other smells peculiar to the farm.

"Well, I'll tell you. Lately our folks have been con-

stantly talking of the independent life of the farmer, and how easy it is, and how they would like it if I would learn to be a farmer. They said there was nothing like it, and several of the neighbors joined in and said I had the natural ability to be one of the most successful farmers in the state. They all drew pictures of the fun it was to work on a farm where you could get your work done and take



"AND PITCH HAY AND SMELL THE SWEET PERFUME."

your fish-pole and go off and catch fish, or a gun and go out and kill game, and how you could ride horses, and pitch hay, and smell the sweet perfume, and go to husking bees, and dances, and everything, and they got me all worked up so I wanted to go to work on a farm. Then an old deacon that belongs to our church, who runs a farm about eight miles out of town, he came on the scene, and said he

wanted a boy, and if I would go out and work for him he would be easy on me because he knew my folks, and we belonged to the same church. I can see it now. It was all a put up job on me, just like they play three card monte on a fresh stranger. I was took in. By gosh, I have been out there a week, and here's what there is left of me. The only way I got a chance to come to town was to tell the farmer I could sell cabbages to you for a shillings a piece. I knew you sold them for fifteen cents and I thought that would give me a shilling. So the farmer said he would pay me my wages in cabbages at a shilling apiece and only charge me a dollar for the horse and wagon to bring them in. So you only pay three cents. Here are thirty cabbages, which will come to ninety cents. I pay a dollar for the horse, and when I get back to the farm I owe the farmer ten cents, besides working a week for nothing. O, it is all right. I don't kick, but this ends farming for Hennery. I know when I have got enough of an easy life on a farm. I prefer a hard life, breaking stones on the streets, to an easy, dreamy life on a farm."

"They did play it on you, didn't they?" said the grocery man. "But wasn't the old deacon a good man to work for?"

"Good man nothing," said the boy, as he took up a piece of horseradish and began to grate it on the inside of his rough hand. "I tell you there's a heap of difference in a deacon in Sunday school, telling about sowing wheat and tares, and a deacon out on a farm in a hurry season, when there is hay to get in and wheat to harvest all at the same time. I went out to the farm Sunday evening with the deacon and his wife, and they couldn't talk too much about the nice time we would have, and the fun; but the deacon changed more than forty degrees in five minutes, after we got to the farm. He jumped out of the wagon

and pulled off his coat and let his wife climb out over the wheel, and yelled to the hired girl to bring out the milk pail, and told me to fly around and unharness the horse,



MUD, BURRS AND MOSQUITOES WERE THICK.

and throw down a lot of hay for the work animals, and then told me to run down to the pasture and drive up a lot of cows. The pasture was half a mile away, and the cows were scattered around in the woods, and the mosquitos were thick, and I got all covered with mud and burrs, and stung with thistles, and when I got the cattle near to the house, the old deacon yelled to me that I was slower than molasses

in the winter, and then I took a club and tried to hurry the cows, and he yelled at me to stop hurrying, 'cause I would retard the flow of milk. By gosh I was mad. I asked for a mosquito-bar to put over me the next time I went after the cows, and the people all laughed at me, and when I sat down on the fence to scrape the mud off my Sunday pants, the deacon yelled like he does in the revival, only he said, 'Come, come, procrastination is the thief of time. You get up and hump yourself and go and feed the pigs.' He was so darn mean that I could not help throwing a burdock burr against the side of the cow he was milking, and it struck her right in the flank on the other side from where the deacon was. Well, you'd a dide to see the cow jump up and blat. All four of her feet were off the ground at a time, and I guess most of them hit the deacon on his Sunday vest, and the rest hit the milk pail, and the cow backed against the fence and bellered, and the deacon was all covered with milk and cow hair, and he got up and throwed the three-legged stool at the cow and hit her on the horn and it glanced off and hit me on the pants just as I went over the fence to feed the pigs. I didn't know a deacon could talk so sassy at a cow, and come so near swearing without actually saying cuss words. Well, I lugged swill until I was homesick to my stomach, and then I had to sleep off horses, and go to the neighbors about a mile away to borrow a lot of rakes to use the next day. I was so tired I almost cried, and then I had to draw two barrels of water with a well bucket, to cleanse for washing the next day, and by that time I wanted to die. It was most nine o'clock, and I began to think about supper, when the deacon said all they had was bread and milk for supper Sunday night, and I ransaled with a tin basin of skim milk, and some old back number bread, and wanted to go to bed, but the deacon wanted to know if I was heathen

enough to want to go to bed without evening prayers. There was no one thing I was less mashed on than evening prayers about that minute, but I had to take a prayer half an hour long on top of that skim milk, and I guess it curdled the milk, for I hadn't been in bed more than half an hour before I had the worst colic a boy ever had, and I thought I should die all alone up in that garret, on the floor, with nothing to make my last hours pleasant but some rats playing with ears of seed corn on the floor, and mice running through some dry pea pods. But how different the deacon talked in the evening devotions from what he did when the cow was galloping on him in the barn yard. Well, I got through the colic and was just getting to sleep when the deacon yelled for me to get up and hustle down stairs. I thought maybe the house was on fire, 'cause I smelled smoke, and I got into my trousers and came down stairs on a jump yelling 'Fire,' when the deacon grabbed me and told me to get down on my knees, and before I knew it he was into the morning devotions, and when he said 'Amen' and jumped and said for us to fire breakfast into us quick and get to work doing chores. I looked at the clock and it was just three o'clock in the morning, just the time Pa comes home and goes to bed in town, when he is running a political campaign. Well, sir, I had to jump from one thing to another from three o'clock in the morning till nine at night, pitching hay, driving reaper, raking and binding, shocking wheat, hoeing corn, and everything, and I never got a kind word. I spoiled my clothes, and I think another week would make a pirate of me. But during it all I had the advantage of a pious example. I tell you, you think more of such a man as the deacon if you don't work for him, but only see him when he comes to town, and you hear him sing, 'Heaven is my Home,' through his nose. He even is farther from home than any

place I ever heard of. He would be a good mate on a Mississippi River steamboat if he could swear, and I guess he could soon learn. Now you take these cabbages and give me ninety cents, and I will go home and borrow ten cents to make up the dollar, and send my chum back with the horse and wagon and my resignation. I was not cut out for a farmer. Talk about fishing, the only fish I saw was a salt white fish we had for breakfast one morning, which was salted by Noah, in the ark," and while the grocery man was unloading the cabbages the boy went off to look for his chum, and later the two boys were seen driving off to the farm with two fishing poles sticking out of the hind end of the wagon.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## DRINKING CHEESE IN THE CELLAR.

"Well, I swoow, here comes a walking hospital," said the grocery man as the bad boy's shadow came in the store, followed by the boy, who looked sick and yellow, and tired, and he had lost half his flesh. "What's the matter with you? Haven't got the yellow fever, have you?" and the grocery man placed a chair where the invalid could fall into it.

"No, got the ager," said the boy as he wiped the perspiration off his upper lip, and looked around the store to see if there was anything in sight that would take the taste of quinine out of his mouth. "Had too much dreamy life of ease on the farm, and been shaking ever since. Darn a farm anyway."

"What, you haven't been to work for the deacon any more, have you? I thought you sent in your resignation;" and the grocery man offered the boy some limberger cheese to strengthen him.

"O, take that cheese away," said the boy, as he turned pale and gagged. "You don't know what a sick person needs any more than a professional nurse. What I want is to be petted. You see I went out to the farm with my chum, and I took the fish-poles and remained in the woods while he drove the horse to the deacon's; and he gave the deacon my resignation, and the deacon wouldn't accept it. He said he would hold my resignation until after harvest, and then act on it. He said he could put me in jail for

breach of promise, if I quit work and left him without giving proper notice; and my chum came and told me, and so I concluded to go to work rather than have any trouble, and the deacon said my chum could work a few days for his board if he wanted to. It was pretty darn poor board for a boy to work for, but my chum wanted to be with me, so he stayed. Pa and Ma came out to the farm to stay a day or two to help. Pa was going to help harvest, and Ma was going to help the deacon's wife, but Pa wanted to carry the jug to the field, and lay under a tree while the rest of us worked, and Ma just talked the arm off the deacon's wife. The deacon and Pa laid in the shade and see my chum and me work, and Ma and the deacon's wife gossipped so they forgot to get dinner, and my chum and me organized a strike, but we were beaten by monopoly. Pa took me by the neck and thrashed out a shock of wheat with my heels, and the deacon took my chum and sat down on him, and we begged and they gave us our old situations back. But we got even with them that night. I tell you, when a boy tries to be good, and quit playing jokes on people, and then has everybody down on him, and has his Pa hire him out on a farm to work for a deacon that hasn't got any soul except when he is in church, and a boy has to get up in the night to get breakfast and go to work, and has to work until late at night, and they kick because he wants to put butter on his pancakes, and feed him skim milk and rusty fat pork, it makes him tough, and he would play a joke on his aged grandmother. After my chum and me had got all the chores done that night, we sat out on a fence back of the house in the orchard, eating green apples in the moonlight, and trying to think of a plan of revenge. Just then I saw a skunk back of the house, right by the outside cellar door, and I told my chum that it would serve them right to drive the skunk down

cellar and shut the door, but my chum said that would be too mean. I asked him if it would be any meaner than for the deacon to snatch us bald headed because we couldn't mow hay away fast enough for two men to pitch in, and he said it wouldn't, and so we got on each side of the skunk and sort of scared it down cellar, and then we crept up softly and closed the cellar doors. Then we went in the house and I whispered to Ma and asked her if she didn't think the deacon had some cider, and Ma she began to hint that she hadn't had a good drink of cider since last winter, and the deacon's wife said us boys could take a pitcher and go down cellar and draw some. That was too much. I didn't want any cider, anyway, so I told them that I belonged to a temperance society, and I should break my pledge if I drawed cider, and she said I was a good boy, for me never to touch a drop of cider. Then she told my chum where the cider barrel was, down cellar; but he ain't no slouch. He said he was afraid to go down cellar in the dark, and so Pa said he and the deacon would go down and draw the cider, and the deacon's wife asked Ma to go down too, and look at the fruit and berries she had canned for winter, and they all went down cellar. Pa carried an old tin lantern with holes in it, to light the deacon to the cider barrel; and the deacon's wife had a taller candle to show Ma the canned fruit. I tried to get Ma not to go, 'cause Ma is a friend of mine, and I didn't want her to have anything to do with the circus; but she said she guessed she knew her business. When anybody says they guess they know their own business, that settles it with me, and I don't try to argue with them. Well, my chum and me sat there in the kitchen, and I stuffed a piece of red table cloth in my mouth to keep from laughing, and my chum held his nose with his finger and thumb, so he wouldn't snort right out. We could hear the cider run in

the pitcher, and then it stopped, and the deacon drank out of the pitcher, and then Pa did, and then they drawed some more cider, and Ma and the deacon's wife were talking about how much sugar it took to can fruit, and the deacon told Pa to help himself out of a crock of fried oakes, and I heard the cover on the crock rattle, and just then I heard the old tin lantern rattle on the brick floor of the cellar, the deacon said 'Merciful goodness;' Pa said 'Helen damnation, I am stabbed;' and Ma yelled 'goodness sakes alive,' and then there was a lot of dishpans on the stairs begun to fall, and they all tried to get up cellar at once, and they fell over each other; and O, my, what a frowy smell came up to the kitchen from the cellar. It was enough to kill anybody. Pa was the first to get to the head of the stairs, and he stuck his head in the kitchen, and drew a long breath, and said 'whoosh! Hen-  
nery, your Pa is a mighty sick man.' The deacon came up next, and he had run his head into a hanging shelf and broken a glass jar of huckleberries, and they were all over him, and he said 'give me air. Earth's but a desert drear.' Then Ma and the deacon's wife came up on a gallop, and they looked tired. Pa began to peel off his coat and vest and said he was going out to bury them, and Ma said he could bury her, too, and I asked the deacon if he didn't notice a faint odor of sewer gas coming from the cellar, and my chum said it smelled more to him as though something had crawled in the cellar and died. Well, you never saw a sicker crowd, and I felt sorry for Ma and the deacon, 'cause their false teeth fell out, and I knew Ma couldn't gossip and the deacon couldn't talk ~~sassy~~ without teeth. But you'd diide to see Pa. He was mad, and thought the deacon had put up the job on him, and he was going to knock the deacon out in two rounds, when Ma said there was no use of getting mad about a dispensation

of providence, and Pa said one more such dispensation of providence would just kill him on the spot. They finally got the house aired, and my chum and me slept on the hay in the barn, after we had opened the outside cellar door so the animal could get out, and the next morning I had the fever and ague, and Pa and Ma brought me home, and I have been firing quinine down my neck ever since. Pa says it is malaria, but it is getting up before daylight in the morning and prowling around a farm doing chores before it is time to do chores, and I don't want any more farm. I thought at Sunday school last Sunday, when the superintendent talked about the odor of sanctity that pervaded the house on that beautiful morning, and looked at the deacon, that the dea on thought the superintendent was referring to him and Pa, but maybe it was an accident. Well, I must go home and shoot another charge of quinine into me," and the boy went out as if he was on his last legs, though he acted as if he was going to have a little fun while he did last.